RUFFLES and DANNY

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF RUFFLES

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or
The Responsibility of Ruffles

by
MARGERY WATSON

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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF RUFFLES

CHAPTER I

A DAZZLING stream of sunshine poured into the breakfast room of the Sanderson home directly across the window seat where Daniel Ross Sanderson, aged five, sat with one leg drawn up, thoughtfully gazing upon a very plump, white knee protruding through a very large hole in his black stocking.

The slow, but unfaltering tick, tock, of the grandfather clock in the far corner of the room intensified the unusual quiet, which did not seem to strike the consciousness of Mr. Sanderson who was enjoying his cup of coffee and the morning paper in leisurely fashion.

But the clear, sweet voice of the boy soon broke the stillness. "Where does the cloth go to, Father?" he asked in a speculative tone.

Mr. Sanderson laid down his paper and, with his hands in his pockets, walked over and looked down at the serious little figure, noting the

fairy rainbows which the sun was making in the curly golden hair.

"What did you say, Danny?" he inquired.

A chubby forefinger slowly traced its way over the smooth skin, following the outline of the torn stocking, while Danny repeated his question, "Where does the cloth go to, Father?"

"Well, er, you see it depends somewhat on how you did it, my boy," he replied, a puzzled smile quickly losing itself in the corners of his mouth as he seated himself close to Danny's feet. He always made a point of taking Danny seriously and endeavored to give a satisfactory answer to all questions, no matter how unexpected.

"I don't 'zactly remember 'bout doin' it," mused Danny.

Mr. Sanderson leaned towards Danny, resting his elbows on his knees, and looked at the stocking. "You see, if you fell down and scraped it, it would be all ground up into little fine pieces, like dust, and blow away."

"Oh!"— Danny's voice and the half comprehending expression of his big brown eyes implied implicit confidence in his father's statement; but also some doubt as to his own capacity for grasping it.

"It's rather unfortunate that you should have done that just now, isn't it?" suggested Mr. Sanderson. "You surely haven't forgotten where we are going?"

Danny slipped quickly to the floor, his little face alight with a wonderful smile.

"I know," he announced, with a joyful little hop; "we're going to the West Harwich water — in Massachuseletts!" (This word was not quite difficult enough for Danny so he tucked in an extra syllable.) Then sidling up to his father and tucking his fingers inside Mr. Sanderson's collar — a funny little habit he had — he asked, "Do you fink there'll be any chickies in Massachuseletts?"

"I shouldn't wonder, but haven't you got enough chickens right here?"

"Oh!" (in a scornfully explanatory tone) "I mean little tiny, weeny ones; 'bout so big." The distance he measured with his chubby hands was rather vague and elastic. "I poked some eggs under the old red hen this morning," he proclaimed, "but she just runned away and left 'em. I couldn't catch the old fing, she wobbled round so fast when I stamped my foot at her."

The whole of Danny's vigorous little body, as he faced his father, his hands clasped behind

his back, was expressive of righteous indignation, and his brown eyes glowed with wrath.

But just here the chug, chug, of an automobile, with a heralding toot, broke in on the conversation and Mr. Sanderson rose, glancing at his watch.

"Sister's late this morning. She got pretty tired yesterday with the packing. Now, my boy, you run find Lula and get her to put on another pair of stockings. Be sure to be all ready when I come back, you know, to start for the train."

Lifting the sturdy little figure in his arms he gave a parting hug, then set him down and watched him scamper off in search of his nurse.

As the car rolled smoothly down the avenue Mr. Sanderson looked off toward the mountains. It was one of Colorado's wonderful days — crystal clear — when nature delights in laying on the colors with a bold and lavish hand, drawing sharp contrasts of light and shadow; and the mountains seem so near that the unwary stranger is often allured by the belief that they are within easy walking distance, so sharply cut is the outline of rock and tree. Tiny, fleecy clouds were still sleeping, snugly cuddled into the hollows here and there half way down Pike's

Peak. A meadow lark was thrilling the air with joyous melody.

"How strange it will seem, and how good," thought Danny's father, "to breathe once more the east wind and feel the salt spray on my face! My! the very thought of it is life-giving! It will be just the thing for Ruth and Danny; this high altitude gets to be a bit of a strain after a while." Then suddenly lines of sadness appeared in the strong face — once more he looked toward the mountains — "If only their mother might have lived!" he breathed.

About three hours later Ruth Sanderson stood before her mirror adjusting a very pretty traveling hat, softly humming the while a little song of spring. Evidently her mind was more attuned to the song and all the little, bubbling, ecstatic emotions that the thought and realization of spring gives rise to, than to anything so utterly uninspiring as the reflections of a mirror; for she was really paying small attention to the charming possibilities of the hat.

> "Coming, coming, Summer's glad childhood
> Through copse, dell and wildwood,
> O'er hillside and glen,"

softly and clearly she sang, when there came a quick nervous rap at the door.

"Come in," called Ruth.

Almost before the words were uttered a tall, vigorous colored girl entered hastily.

"Why, Dewey, you look just a bit ruffled, what's the trouble?"

"Oh, Miss Ruth, it's Danny again! I can't find him anywhere. The trunks have gone — your father is coming up the street now in the auto, and it will be time to start in less than an hour. I told him to run across the lawn and say good-by to Mrs. Harris while I saw to the strapping of the trunks, and when I went over to get him he hadn't been there at all. What shall we do!" Here Dewey (which was Danny's name for Lula; he generally had a name of his own for everybody) paused for breath.

"Um-m," murmured Ruth, with a sliding inflection, and a quick little upward and sidewise tilt of the chin; "really, Dewey, we should have thought to put him on a leash to-day; however, he can't be very far away. Tell Rose and Anna to run round the neighborhood; I'll go meet father; and you look carefully through the house. Get yourself all ready to start, for there's no time to lose."

Ruth was turning away when Dewey, with a critical squint, stepped in front of her. "Just

one minute, Miss Ruth, you never can put your things on just right; let me fix your hat a little." She rearranged the jaunty hat at a more becoming angle, stepping back to get a better effect. "There, that's better." In turning away she gave a surreptitious glance at her own trig figure in Miss Ruth's cheval glass with an expression of satisfaction.

There was a real affection between these two, the young mistress, and the maid who was but a few years older. Ruth had arrived at that elusive, short-lived period of illusions, high ideals, and tentative womanhood; pure, unspoiled, unenlightened to the world's methods of testing the strength and endurance of real character; in other words she was just eighteen and Dewey was twenty-one.

For nearly five years they had taken most of the care of Danny; that small person ruling over, and within, the hearts of both, keeping them on the alert most of the time, since no one could ever predict what he would do next. And now, just at the moment when all was ready for the long-talked-of trip east, Danny took it into his curly head to disappear utterly and entirely. Not that he deliberately planned this dénouement — he simply *did* things — things that seemed to him of supreme impor-

tance. Where could he have vanished to?

Dewey, filled with anxiety, started again on a hurried search for her precious charge. She was wont to say, "Oh, if Danny will only love me that is all I ask." But, at the same time, a discerning onlooker could easily imagine that, Danny once found, her anxiety would be poured forth in a somewhat picturesquely expressed torrent of indignation, with dire threats of future punishment for the wayward Daniel.

While Dewey was occupied giving directions to Rose and Anna who soon had all the neighbors participating in an interested search, Ruth, after putting a few finishing touches to her room, ran lightly down the wide, polished stairway to meet her father.

Lifting her piquant face for the customary kiss, she placed both hands in his and, tilting on her toes with her head cocked to one side said, "Dad, you most certainly do look jolly handsome! I expect all the ladies on the train will be hinting for an introduction to my older brother. Is everything all arranged so we can leave without a care or a thought of anything here at home?"

"I believe it is, daughter," said Mr. Sanderson, with a loving glance into the depths of shadowy blue eyes, "every single thing. We're

going on a jolly, jolly good time. We'll drop all superfluous, conventional luxuries and live a sweet, simple, next-to-nature life."

"Joy, won't it be great!" Then a quizzical little expression flashed the dimples at the corners of her mouth. "But I almost forgot — there *is* just one more matter still to be accomplished. Danny has gone on some sociological investigation and omitted to leave a notice in regard to the hour of his return. The whole neighborhood is organizing a round-up, and — I guess we'd better get busy ourselves."

Thereupon she started for the open front door and almost ran into Lula, who came in with a discouraged face. She had looked everywhere she could think of and didn't know where to turn next. Right behind her came Rose and Anna, followed by several neighbors, all a bit warm and breathless. Mr. Sanderson greeted each arrival in the courtly manner customary to him. He stood with his watch in his hand and rapidly asked a few leading questions, as to where Danny was last seen and what he had been talking about. Suddenly a light broke over his face and the thoughtful frown disappeared.

"Has anyone thought to look in the henhouse?" he asked.

Nobody had.

Then he turned to the chauffeur; "James, kindly put all the suitcases and wraps in the car and have everything ready to start; Ruth, you bring Danny's coat and hat — you and Lula are all ready? — Very well, then come, I think we shall find him. At breakfast this morning Danny asked me if there would be any chickens in Massachusetts, and then he expressed a very decided opinion of the old red hen which he has been trying to coax to set."

With a firm, quick, assured step Mr. Sanderson started off down the drive past the stables, the whole party taking up the line of march. Lula, too impatient to walk, ran ahead. Arriving first, she glanced quickly and anxiously in the door. Immediately her face spread into a broad grin; clapping her hand over her mouth to stifle her laughter she doubled over in a frenzy of mirth and beckoned wildly for the rest to hurry. As one after another came up and gathered in a group about the door, hastily glancing into the spacious and well-kept hen-house, each face was an amusing study: Pride and uncontrollable mirth covered Lula's dark, merry face; Ruth executed a little *pas seul* and, with an inimitable gesture of amused resignation exclaimed, "What next!"

Danny was found — naughty, mischievous, merry Danny. There he was, curled up sound asleep on a board which he had placed across one of the hen's nests, and peering from underneath was the astonished and indignant head of the old red hen. He had, as usual, taken matters into his own hands. If the old red hen wouldn't set she must be made to! — But Danny wasn't used to sitting still, so he fell asleep.

Mr. Sanderson motioned to all to keep quiet; carefully and tenderly he lifted his little son in his arms. Danny only moved a very little; a faint, adorable smile just stirred the corners of his mouth, then he settled comfortably snuggled against his father's shoulder.

Quietly, but quickly, they all walked back to the house. Ruth spoke a few parting words to the neighbors; gave some last directions, with a kindly good-by to Rose and Anna and then got into the tonneau beside her father. Dewey had wrapt Danny's coat about him and was already seated beside James; so off they started toward the station.

"Oh, ma little honey," murmured old Rose with a sniffle, as she watched the car disappear around the bend, "bless yo' baby heart! But ain't you the troublesome little angel!"

CHAPTER II

A HEAVY fog had been pouring in all day; a fine, drizzly, cold rain swept up the Shore Road before the wind and everything was wet and dejected out of doors; the festoons of moss hanging to the scrubby pines dripped and dripped. Everywhere along the road the houses, dotted here and there, were closed, with shutters up — save one.

This fine old homestead of Georgian architecture, with a fresh coat of white paint and green blinds, defied the weather. "Do your best," it seemed to say, "you cannot dampen my spirits. For many years I have protected and cherished the love and cheer within; always my doors swing open to welcome those who desire entrance, and those capable of appreciating my hospitality; and always they shall find light and warmth in plenty."

Straight from the door to the beautiful old gate, with its Colonial posts, stretched a wide gravel path, which would soon be bordered with flowers.

Strangers always pause a moment before this house, and wonder — for it is not a Cape Cod type.

In the large square living-room (if any one room in this house can be so distinguished from another, for each and every room inspires a desire to live in it) was a blazing log fire, over which, on an old iron crane, hung a plump tea-kettle busily singing and steaming.

Mrs. Frost rose from her cosy rocker, laid down her knitting and crossed to the window, with the stately dignity characteristic of all her movements. She was thinking that the captain was gone longer than usual. "Oh," she said aloud, "it's the swallows come back for the summer." Her serene and beautiful face kindled with joy as she waved her fine white handkerchief to the captain, who was opening the barn door to let the birds into their summer residence. For several years now the same pair of swallows returned to build up aloft in the old barn; and if the barn door did not happen to be open when they arrived, they made a great fuss, swooping around and around, occasionally striking the windows of the house, until the attention of someone within was gained and their admittance accomplished.

"And yet," thought the dear lady, "there

are people who would deny that they have reason."

Turning again toward the fire she addressed two huge cats who, stretching and yawning, emerged from their warm bed in the wood basket. "Do you realize, boys, that our peaceful season is nearly at an end, and soon the invasion of summer visitors will commence and the old Shore Road will be alive with joyful feet? Poor Puck, your troubles will begin." She stooped to stroke the soft gray fur. Puck rose on his hind legs to meet her hand half way, thus anticipating the caress, and came down on his fore paws like a bucking broncho. A vigorous cat was Puck. "You don't approve of invasions, old Puckie dear; but Peter Pan, now"—the other cat solemnly winked one eye—"he thinks it's fun. The more children the better, hey, Peter?"

At the opening of the door both cats, with tails erect, trotted to meet the captain as he entered, his face all aglow. Captain Frost was a very large man, hale and hearty, with weather-bronzed skin and keen gray eyes.

"Ah, Mother, you saw our little friends' return, and that means we'll soon be in the swim," laughed the captain as he thought how soon the deserted beach would be spotted with peo-

ple who come for the sake of the fine sea bathing, where the water is so warm it's a joy to young and old.

"I'll just warm up a bit and then be off to the Post Office. We should get a letter from Mary to-night, don't you think?" asked the captain, stretching out his great length in the big winged chair opposite mother's rocker, to warm his feet by the blaze.

"Oh, yes, I feel quite sure we'll hear to-night. Dear girl, how we miss her! But it wouldn't do for her to stay in this quiet place without an occasional break into a livelier pace than that we have steadied down to." The gentle lady smiled across at her sixty-year-old lover, and set the waves of her soft hair to rippling with a deprecating shake of the head.

"Just so," acquiesced the captain, "but it's a pretty good place to come back to; hey, Mother?" It was with pardonable pride that he glanced at the white wainscoted walls, the soft coloring of the Turkish rugs and Oriental draperies which had been picked up on his various voyages of the past, and the fine old mahogany furniture. "We think so, don't we, Peter?" he said, gently stroking the brindled cat which had jumped to his knee.

The ball of yarn on which Puck had had his

eye for some time as it bobbed enticingly about in "Mother's" lap whenever the clicking needles required more material, dropped to the floor. Puck was on it like a flash, batting it hither and yon like a veritable spirit incarnate. Cat and ball flashed in and out among the table legs and chair legs; he curvetted and leaped, his tail arched, his eyes flashing green lights, dropping suddenly ever and anon on top of the ball and kicking vigorously with his hind legs.

Laughing and scolding the captain joined in the game, attempting to rescue the yarn, and Peter was not slow in increasing the confusion but fortunately Puck resented the interference and gave chase to his brother. Off they bounded through the hall, up the stairs, head to tail, making as much noise as a couple of young colts.

The captain, his sides shaking with laughter, commenced to follow up the trail of the yarn, winding as he went.

"We didn't make any mistake, Mother, when we named those cats. I think Puck would make a good try at putting a 'girdle round about the earth in forty minutes,' hey? — and do you rek'-lect the day we found Peter when he was a tiny little ball of fur, playing with his own shadow, and how we all said he must be called Peter

Pan? — There, I don't know what you're knitting, Mother, but I guess it'll all come out in the wash," and he laid the ball, rather soiled and scrubby-looking in her lap.

"Now I'm off for the mail, having warmed up consider'ble."

"Do turn your collar up, William, and don't get gossiping with Sol Turner and stay too long, for tea will be all ready and waiting by the time you get back."

The captain stooped his burly figure and kissed the shining white hair. Mrs. Frost blushed like a young girl, for just at that moment Eunice Pease poked her head in from the dining-room.

"Oh lor'! 'scuse me — I thought the captain hed gone." Her retreat was somewhat hasty and agitated. "Well, ain't they the beatenist!" she said with a grin, her back to the door; "anybody'd think they was just a-courtin', stead o' bein' father and mother to a gal old 'nuff to be called a 'bachelor-maid,' whatever that is."

Eunice put a hand up to cool her own hot cheek and went back to the kitchen.

CHAPTER III

LETTER from Mary Frost to her mother.

SALEM, MASS., 20 May, 1910.

Dearest Mother:

Your very humble and unassuming daughter salutes you. In case the meekness of my opening sentence requires accounting for, let me tell you at once that on Thursday last, a good old-fashioned no'theaster being rampant, I decided to brave the elephants and make a circuit of calls on some of the very dear friends of your youth, as I should be quite reasonably sure of finding them at home. Everywhere I received a most cordial welcome, but came away in each case with the impression deeply stamped on my mind that the consensus of opinion, simmered and boiled down, might be expressed after this fashion, "You are very charming, my dear, but you can never hope to be as beautiful as your mother." I counseled myself on the home stretch, bracing my umbrella against the buffets of wind and rain, to the effect that the next time I have occasion to call on Mother's friends, where

comparisons are probable, I would better choose some sunny day and don my best bib and tucker.

Dear heart, when I call to mind the fact that my delightful visit is almost at an end, don't for one minute imagine that the corners of my mouth are down, or my handkerchief damp, for happy as it has been I shall be still more happy to get back to you and dear old Dad, and Puck, and Peter Pan, and the garden, and all the friends. I shall leave on the 1.30 from Boston. Please tell Jock Tuttle I shall need his help for several days next week as I've laid in a stock of seed, shrubs, and other things for the garden. Apropos of the getting of these supplies just listen and I will tell you of the day I spent down in the old Faneuil Hall Market Place in Boston. Who do you suppose went with me and devoted a whole day to my service, playing porter, general adviser, landscape gardener and mentor, all in one? — A descendant of the great Nathaniel Hawthorne! He's a splendid specimen of what-Harvard-can-do-when-it-tries type of young manhood. He, also, is of a literary turn of mind; says he intends writing a novel this summer and declares most emphatically and convincingly that the heroine shall trip through the pages in my semblance; that therefore it will be

necessary to study me from all points of view, to which end he means to come down on the cape and spend at least five minutes each day in taking pen snap-shots of my pussonality. Now, from what I have seen of Mr. Richard Huntington I do not anticipate appearing in the character of a second Miriam, neither as Hilda, nor yet as Hepzibah; but more likely as the star part in a play entitled "How the Sea-nymph Became Stranded on Monomoy," or some such imaginative, unheard-of, full-of-possibilities title as that. I really think he is serious about spending the summer in our vicinity, however, as he knows the Sterlings and has heard much about our summer colony.

The most interesting incident of our day occurred just before lunch when we were fortunate in witnessing a most entertaining little drama which was performed in the South Station. The stage setting was realistic, the acting true in spite of the fact that there had been no reading and rehearsing of the parts. But this is how it happened, and I am still at a loss to explain the why and the wherefore:

We were strolling along Summer Street in search of a certain hardware store when we overheard someone say that General T. was leaving on a special at 1.15.

I stopped short and looked a question at Mr. Huntington.

"Sure thing," said he, "let's have a look at the lion; after the knocks he's been getting lately if he roars at all he will 'roar us as gently as a sucking dove.'" So off we hastened to the station which was but a block away. The crowd was pretty dense. However, thanks to Mr. Huntington's tact, quick wit, and foot-ball training, we managed to attain a good position.

As we were a little ahead of time we amused ourselves by watching the people. My attention was immediately drawn to a party of three. Indeed, no one could have seen those three without turning for a second glance: a charming girl of about eighteen, with such wonderful coloring it made me ache for the power of an artist to reproduce it in such enduring colors that the work might go on down the ages to come, delighting future generations as it charmed me. She was of medium height, slender, but firmly built; rather short black hair, just long enough to tie at the nape of the neck with a big bow and then curl bewitchingly up with stray, tendrily locks about the ears and temples; deep, deep blue eyes shadowed by long black lashes, with traces of the traditional "smutty finger." The color of her skin was

riotous — rich brown shading to delicate pink. There was a sparkle in the whole expression of her. She wore a tailored dark blue suit with tan trimmings, a Panama hat rolled back from the face, bound with a scarf shading from blues to buff. She looked like a girl who might have lived in the saddle and it's my impression she must have been a Westerner.

Holding her hand was a little chap of about five; as great a contrast to herself in looks as possible. He had a rather serious little face, oval in shape — Sir Joshua Reynolds type, with big brown eyes and short, very golden curls. Standing just back of the two was a tall, handsome colored girl dressed simply in black.

I was so absorbed that I failed to notice a stir in the crowd and the great man had almost boarded the train before Mr. Huntington, noticing my abstraction, touched me on the shoulder, with a nod in the direction of the general's approach. Someone in the crowd waved a hat and cried, "Three cheers for a *Man!*" Others caught the enthusiasm and the multitude surged and cheered. Then my spinal column got thrilly — same sensation that the combination of a military band and the American flag floating to the breeze always creates, you know; and silly and ridiculous as it certainly was, the tears

stood in my eyes. What it is to be emotional! But then, I was thinking what a pity it was that this strong, virile, purposeful leader of men should have had his head turned. However, I for one am not ready to believe that he has lost his equipoise although he may wobble a bit now and then.

When the cheering subsided I heard a clear, childish voice calling, "Wait, oh wait, I wants to speak wif you!"

The little curly-headed boy had slipped through an opening in the crowd, too small for his sister (or so I suppose her to be) to follow. His hat was pushed off and the crowd seemed to part involuntarily to make way for his onward rush. Someone lifted him up and with his arms outstretched towards the general, again his clear, high, soprano voice called eagerly, "I wants to speak wif you." They passed him along from man to man. The general had turned on the platform, greatly interested, and stood waiting till he could reach out and take the little chap in his arms.

A hush fell over the crowd, breathless with interest.

Very gently and with a loving smile the man of affairs greeted the boy, "Now, my little fellow, what can I do for you?"

Timidly one dimpled hand stroked the square chin, and, with the soft curves of his baby face close to the strong and determined lines on the face of the man, he breathed a satisfied little sigh. "Oh, I'm so glad! I did want to talk wif you! You see, my very dear father is feeling sorry 'bout you. He says he's so 'fraid you're going to do somefin to 'spoint all the peoples what's been lovin' you so hard. But," and he cocked his little head to one side, all the time gazing into the eyes of the man, and the dearest, sunniest smile flashed over his serious baby face, "I don't fink he needs to worry. I'll tell him I likes you and I guess the mens and peoples will go right on likin' you. You — you — wants 'em to, don't you? It's raver nice to have peoples love you, if "— and he evidently decided to qualify his statement, judging from his own past experience —"if they don't bother by kissing you too much."

The general's face was a study. He looked as though he would like to make a speech to answer the people whose thoughts were reflected in the voice of the child, but there was no time so he merely said:

"Yes, I quite agree with you. Will you tell me your name?"

The child straightened his back and raised

his head with a proud gesture, carrying his hand to the place where his hat should be in a military salute. "Danny Ross San-der-son."

"And where is your father?" asked the general.

Then the brown eyes looked round rather startled. Haltingly he said: "Father went out for a little while — I guess I better be going back to Ruffles" (that's what it sounded like). "Where is she?"

I was just on the point of sending Mr. Huntington to the rescue when I saw that the tall colored girl was forcing her way through the crowd and had nearly reached the steps.

"Oh, here's Dewey!" the boy exclaimed in a relieved tone; "Good-by Mr.— Mr.— I can't say your name, but it's — it's all right, isn't it?"

"Yes, Danny, it's quite all right, I believe."

Then the boy in apologetic fashion said, "*You* may kiss me if you wants to."

"Now that's very kind of you," said the general, "and I appreciate it, but being gentlemen we'll shake hands instead." They gravely went through the ceremony, just as an official called, "'Board!"

Passing the boy to the arms of the colored girl the general lifted his hat with a gesture

of reverence, and a longing, loving look at that darling baby face.

The crowd cheered louder than ever. The train started, the general still on the platform with his hat raised and the boy with one arm tight round the neck of the colored girl waved his other hand till the train was out of sight.

I had looked several times to see how the charming girl was taking all this. She appeared intensely amused, and many and varied were the expressions which mirrored her thoughts and rippled one after another across her features, but not once did I get an impression of any idea of fear or worry. She seemed to be accepting the child's act from his own point of view, waiting quietly till the crowd should disperse and she could once more get hold of the slippery little political adviser.

While she was waiting (for the crowd thinned out rather slowly) a distinguished-looking gentleman joined her with an anxious look of inquiry. The girl nodded, with a bubbling laugh, in the direction of the boy and evidently (for I was not near enough to catch the conversation) began an animated recital of the events of the past ten minutes.

Mr. Huntington gave expression to his sentiments by a prolonged whistle, and, turning to

me, said with a long breath, "My word, Miss Frost, what do you know about that!"

Now that, my dear unsophisticated parents, is slang and serves as an exclamation point in modern conversation.

"I know I wish I could claim acquaintance with those people," I replied. "Who do you suppose they are?"

"Oh, I say, can't you think of some way we could manage to be of service to them, you know? Why under the canopy didn't I forestall that colored girl and get to the boy first!" groaned Mr. Huntington.

But by this time they had disappeared into the waiting-room and we couldn't very well follow them; so, with sighs of resignation we decided to go and get lunch.

The sandman is getting persistent. I must leave the rest of the news till I see you on Saturday. Good-night, dear Father and Mother.

Your loving daughter,
MARY.

Neither the general, nor Mary, nor any of the witnesses to the above incident could know how many times Danny had stood by his father's knee listening to the conversation of the men

in the smoking car and grasping with a child's quick instinct that all was not well with the man he had been taught to revere. There was so little to be done by a small boy on a long railway trip in the way of amusement and so he had thought long and, for a small boy, seriously of the scraps of conversation he had caught.

CHAPTER IV

THE end of the long journey came at last. Danny was very tired; the restricted area possible for physical exercise in a Pullman, for three days at a stretch, had not been adequate to the needs of Danny's legs; even the woman with the parrot who boarded the train at Barnstable had palled (no pun intended) after a while. Even Ruth announced that she felt as if she could sleep for a week without stirring.

"That's because we have come down from such a height," said her father. "Just think, we have been steadily descending from about six thousand feet to practically sea level. This cape is about as flat as any place you could find. It will take us two or three days to get acclimated." He set Danny down on the platform of the little wooden station, which had a forlorn and deserted appearance, for they seemed to be the only arrivals.

"Where's the West Harwich water?" demanded Danny in an I'm-in-no-mood-to-be-trifled-with manner.

Dewey snatched him up, giving him a smacking kiss. "Now li'l Cap'n," she said, soothingly, "don't be in too much of a hurry. We've got to take a li'l drive first." But Danny wriggled quickly to the ground and ran toward a three-seated buckboard which was just driving up, drawn by two good-looking horses. Springing down, the driver came forward and touched his cap; "Mr. Sanderson, sir?" he asked.

"Right, my man," agreed Mr. Sanderson. "Are you to drive us to the cottage?"

"Yes, sir! Right this way, sir—Front seat, little chap?"

He swung Danny up to the slippery cushion which was plenty wide enough for three grown persons, so Dewey clambered up also. Since the experience in the South Station Dewey allowed she'd give him very little rope.

"How about the trunks, my friend?" inquired Mr. Sanderson.

"We'll bring them up later, after next train, sir."

"All right. Now we're off!"

There was little chance for conversation as they rattled over the sandy road. It so happens that the drive from the station until you reach the village proper is extremely uninteresting, with only a few straggling farm-houses. Danny

was quiet for a long time. He sat with his head leaning against the back of the seat, turning to look first on one side and then on the other. Finally he said, dreamily, "Dewey —"

"Well, what?" asked the girl.

"I guess," he said slowly, "that all the peoples must uv gone on a picnic to the North Cañon."

The driver grinned with delight and flicked the off horse with the whip.

"Well, if they have," smiled Dewey, "they'll need all their sandwiches before they get back."

"You jest wait, little feller, in a week or two there'll be picnic enough right here. It's early in the season yet. These horses of mine won't be quite so fat by the end of the summer. Kit! Jim! wake up," he called. "You're fat and lazy now all right." The rhythmic click, clack, of the hoof-beats which quickened in response to his voice seemed to contradict his accusation.

When they came in sight of the village Ruth waked up a bit. Her father had sat with arms folded, filling his lungs with deep breaths of salt air. "My, this smells good to me!" he said. "The wind must be right off the ocean."

The driver beamed with appreciation. "Wall, you see," he explained, "the cape's so narrer that whichever way the wind blows, and

it blows the heft of the time down here, it ain't fur to come acrost the land."

As they drove through the village street he named the points of interest and finally they turned a corner. "Now we're on the Shore Road," he said, "'twon't be long afore you can see your own house."

They passed a pretty stretch of pine woods on the right and several attractive summer residences on the left just showing through the groves of pine, carpeted with the dull red needles, and caught occasional glimpses of a tidal river.

"Oh, Dad," exclaimed Ruth, "just look at that beautiful old white house. It looks as though it was just inviting us to come in. Who lives there, driver?"

With a great deal of pride the man informed Ruth that: "Cap'n and Mis' Frost and Miss Mary live there all the year round. Miss Mary has been off on a visit to Salem, but is calkerlatin' to get back to-morrer."

Pointing with his whip to a distant corner of the garden: "There's the Cap'n now. You'll get to know them all and there ain't any nicer folks anywheres, I don't believe."

As the buckboard rattled by, the large man in the garden rose from his task among the plants, stood at his full height and raised a wide-

brimmed straw hat with a gesture of welcome. Mr. Sanderson cordially returned the salutation and Danny waved his hand.

"That'll be someone for *you* to play with, Dad," predicted Ruth. "He looks as though he could reel off yarns without limit. Danny! Danny! look!" she continued in a crescendo of excitement, pointing to the wide expanse of bay which now came in sight. The day was gloriously clear, the water blue and sparkling. Danny stood up, all animation.

"The West Harwich water!" he gasped; "Ruffles, it's — it's laughing, I think." Danny's own laugh was a merry gurgle of pure, unadulterated joy.

"Let's guess which is our house," said Ruth playfully, as they rumbled over the wooden bridge which crosses the river. "Oh, I hope it's that one way out on the point in the pine grove."

"You're a good guesser, Miss," approved the driver, "for that's it."

The rest of the day was full of work for all; inspecting the rooms, assigning the chambers, unpacking, getting something to eat for four hungry mortals. It was a weary little boy that Ruth finally tucked up in the small

white bed in her own room, which looked out across the bay to the east.

"Listen, Danny," she whispered as the curly head dropped to the pillow, "I think I hear a Whip-poor-will."

"Ask him — to wait — till mornin'," muttered a sleepy voice. In a second his breathing came soft and regular. Ruth dropped a light kiss on the rounded cheek and crept quietly down to take a turn on the piazza with dad.

CHAPTER V

"YES, JOCK, we'll plant the hollyhocks right here against the south kitchen wall, so Eunice can have something bright to look at when she's washing the dishes."

"Peers to me that's a trifle resky, Miss Mary, ain't it?" and Jock Tuttle, with a twinkle in the tail of his eye, placed himself so as to be plainly heard through the open kitchen window.

"Where does the risk come in?" demanded Mary Frost. "Hollyhocks need all the sun they can get, don't they?"

"Wall, yes, but yer see I warn't referin' to the health of them hollyhocks, but jest er wonderin' whether yer pa'd want to pay Eunice for leanin' her elbows on the winder sill and gazin' at posies."

"I rather guess, Jock Tuttle," came a strident voice from within, "that he'd about as lieves pay me for improvin' my artistic edycation as to be given you good money for adding hot air to a mornin' already warm enuf." The slamming of a tin cover on an iron kettle gave additional emphasis.

"Jock, you're an old tease," smiled Mary. "When you get a smell of Eunice's cookies you'll wish you'd been more politic."

"Oh, I'll get some, don't you fear, little lady." (Said with all a man's assurance.)

"Huh!" was all the response vouchsafed from the kitchen to this.

Jock went on with his digging and Mary sat down on the grass with her hands clasped about her knees. Her simple lavender garden dress with its short, turned back, kimono sleeves displayed her slender, shapely arms. A becoming, white, Dutch sunbonnet shaded her clear-cut features.

There was a purity and delicacy in the coloring and modeling of Mary's face, which, while not strictly beautiful, emanated a decided charm. Her life in a country village, where the different families and homes are like separate members of one large family, and where the demands for personal interest and sympathy are constant, had bred a lasting expression of tenderness and ever ready compassion on the lovable humanness of Mary Frost's personality.

"Have you seen anything of the people over on the point, Jock?"

"Nope — but I've heard a lot about 'em; Sol Turner thinks they're about the best thing

that ever happened down here; says they's 'ristocrats of the right sort; no snobs to them. They've hired the Tucker barn and keep saddle horses, and a saucy-lookin' little pony for the kid.— Nobody seems to know much about the folks that's took the cottage across the way — comin' from St. Louis, I understand, and get here to-morrer."

"How is the *Petrel* coming out this year, Jock, is she in commission yet?"

"Yep! I put on the last co't o' paint this morning and she looks pretty, I can tell you."

Jock Tuttle was skipper of a catboat, as well as gardener; and during the summer months had his hands full taking out parties from the hotel and cottages.

"I know one young man that'll keep the *Petrel's* wings busy," said Mary.

"That so? Where's he goin' to put up? — Hotel I s'pose."

"Yes; his name is Richard Huntington, Harvard graduate, comes from Salem. You'll know him when you see him, Jock, for there's a saying that you can tell a Harvard man anywhere, but you can't tell him much!"

Mary rose with a little laugh. "Now I'll go see how father is getting along in the vegetable garden. The place is going to look pret-

tier than ever this year," she said, glancing about with the delight of a true nature lover.

The air was so still and warm it seemed a mid-summer day.

Back a little way from the road and hidden by thick lilac bushes, just now in full bloom, was a honey-suckle arbor where Mary's hammock was swung. It looked enticing.

"I believe I'll just enjoy the coolness of it a few minutes," thought Mary, and she stepped in. The hammock was swung straight across the back, opposite the entrance; a rustic table supplied with books was close at hand, and on either side stood comfortable hickory chairs with turkey-red cushions.

There's a knack about getting into a hammock which is by no means given to everyone. There was no room for doubt, however, about Mary's comfort after she got finally settled, with two or three cushions tucked into just the right places. The hammock swung low; with one foot she gently rocked herself, dangling her sun-bonnet by the strings from her hand. Gazing dreamily up through the new, tender, green leaves of the honey-suckle, she thought with pleasure of the future blossoms, the humming-birds poising and darting from flower to flower, and the drowsy-drowsy hum of the bees.

Very soon the sunbonnet dropped to the floor, and Mary slept.

Following along the bank of the river, whistling and whittling as he walked, came Mr. Sanderson.

"By Jove, I believe I'm tired! — must have covered a good bit of country; getting hungry, too. It's astonishing what an appetite one gets up down here. Let's see, where am I anyway?" he soliloquized. "Why, this must be Captain Frost's land I should judge; guess there's no objection to my taking a short cut up through to the road and I may run across the captain."

Throwing away his stick and pocketing his knife he sauntered along with an appreciative eye for all the beauties of the place; the grass seemed softer and greener here than elsewhere, it was short and even and well-kept. Catching a whiff of the fragrance from the lilacs he looked about for the source.

"My, what an ideal place to rest!" With a sigh of content, he turned his steps in the direction of the arbor. His approach being noiseless, Mary never saw his start of surprise, and then the look of admiration which swept over his manly face, followed swiftly by a sense of shame at his unintentional intrusion, nor the instinctive

uncovering of his head as he backed quickly away.

Thus there happened an unconscious mutual knowledge of each other's existence.

Mary smiled in her sleep as she dreamed of the boy and girl in the South Station.

CHAPTER VI

THE voyage of discovery on which Mr. Sanderson had started, several hours earlier, intent upon acquainting himself with the possibilities of the surrounding country, was certainly opening up unexpected vistas — so he thought, as he continued his walk toward the white house — nor were the surprises at an end.

Rounding the corner of the house he came in sight of the wide piazza; and there, leaning against the knees of a motherly, white-haired lady, with all the ease of long acquaintance and intimate confidence, was his own small son. Their interest in each other appeared absorbing.

"Another 'butt in' for me, I guess; well, as Danny is ahead of me, it's not a case of 'where angels fear to tread' anyway, so here goes."

Danny's back being toward the garden he did not see his father until Mrs. Frost rose, taking him by the hand, announcing that a strange gentleman was coming up the drive.

"Why, it's father," said Danny.

"Run then, and meet him," she urged, "and invite him to come up."

Have you ever had among your acquaintances, or friends, a woman of nearly sixty years of age who still retains the bloom and contour of youth on her cheeks; the alluring curves of the lips, with an intermittent dent at their corners; a skin soft, smooth and rosy; eyes which have refused to see anything but the best there was in the lives of others; a figure of comfortable curves; and the crowning glory of snow-white hair of the texture and gloss of a baby's? Very likely not, for such are rare. Only a life of perfect optimism, love, good will and charity can wear this outward expression. But with my very best endeavors I can give you no adequate idea of the magnetism of the captain's wife. Danny had flown to her arms as naturally as though he had always known the comfort of their ministration.

Standing at the piazza steps, waiting to extend further hospitality, with the folds of her simple black dress falling softly about her; a wide, low, white lace collar fastened with an old-fashioned amethyst pin surrounded by pearls, (there was always a touch of lavender somewhere about her) she made Mr. Sanderson, in his turn, feel the grace of her presence and the charm of her welcome.

Bending with old-time gallantry over her ex-

tended hand he brushed it lightly and reverently with his lips.

"I was coming to ask pardon for trespassing," he said, "and now I see I must beg it for two."

"On the contrary, I am really indebted to Danny for a very delightful half hour, Mr. Sanderson; you see he has told me who you are — I am Mrs. Frost. Will you not sit down and rest a while?" she urged, indicating an inviting lounging chair.

"Thank you, I have been on a long tramp; if you will pardon the dust I shall be most happy to accept. But I very much fear Danny has run away from home. He is not allowed to go about alone."

Glancing around for Danny, Mrs. Frost exclaimed, "Will you look at that baby! What is he so interested in?"

Sitting on the ground, his feet wide apart and legs straight out, compass fashion, his hands on his knees and head bent in complete absorption over some object, Danny had forgotten their existence.

"It's probably some bug," laughed his father. "Nothing in nature escapes his notice."

"What have you found, Danny?" asked Mrs. Frost.

Danny rose in great excitement, rushing to the piazza steps. "Come see mine gobbie, come see mine gobbie!" he said, with shining eyes.

"What is a gobbie?" laughingly inquired Mrs. Frost. "I think I'll go and see." Danny eagerly slipped his hand in hers and led her to the spot.

His treasure was an extremely queer-looking sort of short, round, fat worm that looked like a cross between a diminutive owl and a fish, with small yellow rings for eyes.

Danny laughed with glee and took the disagreeable-looking thing up in his hands. "He's mine gobbie," he announced with satisfaction.

"He's certainly beautiful," she said in pretended admiration, but carefully backing away from the out-stretched hand.

She was wishing the captain would come from the garden, and wondering where Mary was.

"Danny, I think we are going to have some cookies and milk up on the piazza in a few minutes. Don't you want to put the gobbie under this big green leaf, where he can eat his supper, and will you run to that summer-house down there and see if there is a lady in it? And if you find a lady, tell her to come to me?"

The gobbie was carefully tucked under the

leaf and the small, sturdy legs scampered on their mission.

Returning to the piazza Mrs. Frost now turned her attention to her other guest and they were soon talking happily — but Mr. Sanderson noted with speculative amusement the direction in which Danny's feet were flying.

"How have you managed to coax such a wonderful garden from this sandy soil?" he asked with interest.

"Eternal vigilance on the part of Captain Frost and my daughter Mary, with some outside help."

Then they launched into a discussion of the relative value of soils, and Mr. Sanderson explained the method of irrigation employed in Colorado.

As Danny neared the entrance to the arbor he began to wonder who the lady would be, and his steps slackened in a growing embarrassment. Cautiously he peeped in. Seeing Mary asleep he hesitated, started back, then took a step or two toward her. "She's a pretty lady," he said to himself, and gradually he drew quite near; then he grew courageous and gently touched her cheek.

Mary's eyes opened and looked right at Danny, whose own eyes had the look of a startled

deer, with the same alert, ready-to-run-at-any-moment expression.

"I don't believe I can be awake," she said quietly; "am I dreaming, or is this a fairy?" and she smiled in a disarming manner. She tried not to show her astonishment, fearful lest he should run away. It was so wonderful that this beautiful boy of her dreams should be right here in the flesh.

Happily she had said just the right thing. The word fairy appealed to Danny. This lady looked as though she could play — he guessed he'd try her and see. Seizing a twig he spied near at hand, he jumped to a chair and in a high-pitched, piping little voice announced, "I'm a fairy king."

"And what shall I be?" asked Mary.

"Well, you're just a girl now, but I can make you anything I wants to by touching you with this wand."

"Oh, yes, I see. Please make me something nice."

Prancing over to Mary he waved the wand in mystic fashion over her, and touching her, said: "Now you're a fairy girl, and we must go out and dance around the flowers."

Growing uneasy at the length of time Danny was gone, Mr. Sanderson and Mrs. Frost walked

to the end of the piazza which commanded a view of the arbor, just in time to see Danny emerge with mincing steps, followed immediately by Mary, her lavender skirt held high with both hands, tripping a sort of two-step. In and out among the shrubs they circled, chanting in sing-song fashion. Looking up Danny caught sight of the laughingly interested spectators and his face became blank. Watching him, Mary asked what was the matter?

Mrs. Frost picked up a megaphone lying on the table near by and called out, "When the masquerade is over refreshments will be served on the piazza!"

Mary's skirts dropped hastily, a rosy flush suffused her face, and she and Danny looked guiltily at each other.

"Is that your father, dear?" she asked, trying to arrange the loosened strands of her hair.

"Yes, let's go get some cookies," he suggested, slipping his hand in hers.

There was nothing to do but to assume a dignified ease she was far from feeling; and be presented, all dishevelled as she was, not at all realizing that the exercise, the embarrassment, and the stray locks made her appear much younger than she really was.

In response to her mother's introduction

Mary's handclasp of welcome was a firm one, and there was a mute exchange of apology and understanding as their eyes met.

"I hope you will allow Danny to come and play fairies with me very often," laughed Mary.

"I expect I shall have to make it a business to see that you are not imposed upon, after this — but it looks to me as though there was a day of judgment coming for Danny;" and Mr. Sanderson called attention to a cloud of dust on the other side of the river, out of which emerged a horse and rider, who clattered at breakneck speed over the wooden bridge. Seizing the megaphone he gave a loud wild call which so surprised Ruth that she nearly pulled the mare on her haunches. Looking in the direction of the call she saw the group on the piazza and came on at a reasonable pace, entering the drive at a walk. Throwing the reins on the neck of the fine animal, she folded her arms with a prettily assumed air of displeasure and addressed her father:

"Dad, when you and Danny are going to a party it will avoid confusion if you will kindly announce the fact."

Mary ran down the steps extending both hands. "We're so glad you have come," she exclaimed. "Please jump down and we'll have

a real truly party ; but you mustn't scold Danny. I know you are Danny's sister — I've seen you before. I'll tell you about it some time. Just let mother make you comfortable while I lead the horse to the barn and find father, and then we'll be complete. No, Mr. Sanderson, please — it's a pleasure," but he insisted on leading the horse.

" If you like to come and see that I put her in the right place," he conceded, " Bonny will appreciate it."

They walked out to the barn, with Bonny's beautiful head between them, her soft velvety muzzle rubbing Mary's hand ingratiatingly, for with an animal's quick and sure instinct the mare responded to the keen appreciation of this new friend.

CHAPTER VII

THE architect was very canny when he planned this fine old house: the long, deep piazza, which was really a summer living-room, instead of being built out from the house was built *in* between two ells so that it was protected from the wind on three sides, and so it was possible to serve tea here very comfortably; especially as the screening was fine enough to keep out those irritating little black midges which sometimes are bothersome, as well as mosquitoes. No matter where one sat in this cosy, roomy retreat there was sure to be a small table near by, covered with dainty white linen on which to rest cup and saucer, or plate. But the wide piazza rail looked enticing to Ruth. It could easily serve as chair and table at the same time. Leaning easily with her back against a pillar, swinging one foot after the manner of a boy, her riding-skirt and tan-colored sweater revealed the perfect lines of her figure, and a close-fitting cap sat jauntily on the saucy, tip-tilted head.

A little flick of amusement glinted in Mr.

Sanderson's eyes as Mary slipped into a corner of the Gloucester hammock; it was very evident she was partial to hammocks. Eunice brought out plates of thin sandwiches and wafer cookies, placed them about on the tables, passed a tray bearing dainty cups of tea and glasses of rich milk, and was now devoting herself to Danny who sat at a tiny table over in a corner, a napkin tied under his chin, his attention divided between his glass of milk and Peter Pan who was rubbing back and forth against Danny's legs, making friends in his soft, subtle way (Peter was afraid of nothing, never having been ill-treated), and dear Mrs. Frost was entertaining this youngest guest with stories of Peter and Puck, while she gently rocked back and forth in the old-fashioned, high-backed chair.

"Now, dearie, have another cookie," urged Eunice, enraptured by Danny's beauty and winning ways.

Ruth had kept a watchful eye on their corner of the piazza and presently shook her head slowly, questioning the wisdom of a surfeit of good things. "If I don't interfere soon," she remarked, "Eunice will certainly have Danny at bursting point."

"Oh! no, these cookies can't hurt him; besides, he's not eating so very much, he's so busy

making love to Peter. Miss Sanderson, I think Danny's the dearest thing that ever happened," said Mary.

Ruth laughed, "I was just thinking practically the same thing about your mother," she replied. Then added: "Yes, Danny is a darling, but he'll give you a few surprises before the summer's over, won't he, Dad?"

Mr. Sanderson glanced over at Danny whose nose at that moment was buried deep in the glass of milk, which he finally set down with a gasp for breath. "It's certainly difficult to conceive how anyone can look so angelic, so serious, so-so-quiescent as Danny, and yet get into so many different kinds of mischief. His inquisitive little brain is never at rest except when he sleeps, and his determination to get at the bottom of things gets him into all sorts of trouble."

"How did he stand the long journey from the West?" asked Captain Frost.

"Pretty well on the whole; he got acquainted with everybody on the train from the porters up to a queer, bright little old lady who was traveling alone all the way from California," said Mr. Sanderson, rising to pass Mary more sandwiches.

"I should say he did!" chuckled Ruth

reminiscently. "One morning," she continued, "I began to think there must be something the matter with him; I got quite worried. There was a scared look in his eyes and he kept putting his hand over his mouth. I had hard work to get him to eat his breakfast. We had a state-room and I'm ashamed to confess I'm terribly lazy mornings; never get up till the last call. But Danny's always up with the birds and I left it to Lula to keep track of him. I was really afraid something had happened. Finally I said: 'Danny, whatever is the matter with you, have you got a toothache? What makes you hold on to your mouth all the time, do you feel sick?'

"'No, Ruffles,' he mumbled, 'I don't feel sick, but I don't want to lose mine teef.'

"'Lose your teeth!' I exclaimed in astonishment. 'What idea have you got in your head now!'

"Well, I thought the porter who was standing near by was having a spasm. In reply to my glance of inquiry he sputtered out: 'Oh, Lord, Miss, he —— he —' and off he goes again into another convulsion. After a while he managed to tell me, on the installment plan, with lesser attacks of mirth in between, that: 'De li'l ole lady in No. 10., Miss, while she was gone to de

toilet-room I make up her berth so's to have it all ready, Miss, when she come back dis mornin'; but af'er a while she ring for me furious-like, and when I come husslin' along she hollers out, so's Marse Danny and anyone else can hear: "Where's ma teeth?" she says. "I'se sure I don' know, ma'am, says I." "I lef' 'em in ma piller-case," she says, "while I go for ma bath! Where's the piller-case?" she ask. "I done took 'em all off to de landry-box," says I. "Take me to de landry-box quick!" she screams. An' so I s'pose, Miss, Marse Danny — he — he,' and off he goes again as he looked at Danny, who hadn't lost the habit and still had his hand to his mouth. 'Oh, Lord, Miss, he's 'fraid his teeth will come out!'

"So then I had to have a heart to heart talk with Danny."

"Did the little lady find her teeth?" laughingly asked Mary.

"Yes, she did.—You never know what you are going to run up against in a Pullman sleeper. But she was the brightest, smartest, little grasshoppery old lady you ever saw and she entertained all our fellow-passengers as well as Danny."

"Well," said the captain, moving his big body restlessly, as though the very thought of

the confinement of a Pullman car was irksome, "I've cruised pretty much all over the world but I reckon I'll never get far inland. I couldn't breathe in one of those boxes. If I ever have occasion, Miss Ruth," he said with a wink, "to go to your part of the country it'll have to be in a prairie schooner. Are there any to be found now-a-days?"

"Oh, sure, there are still a few families left with a roving spirit and they live in them. You might fit one up with a motor; but what's the matter with an air ship? That's more in your line and you'd stand a better chance of arriving in the same generation, wouldn't you?"

The captain shook his head. "No, Miss Ruth, 'twould never do; I should miss the swells."

"You might meet some of the more exclusive ones up among the clouds," said Ruth facetiously. "You know an air ship offers grand opportunities to escape from the common herd."

"Or you could take a few white caps along with you for the sake of 'Auld lang syne,'" suggested Mr. Sanderson.

"No use," and Mary simulated a sigh; "Father couldn't get along without a crew."

"Oh, a rooster would supply that need."

This was a little too much and Ruth had to dodge the pillow her father let fly.

"I'll take her home before she disgraces me any further," he announced, rising and crossing over to bid good-by to his hostess and get hold of Danny's hand.

"By the way," said the captain to Ruth, "are you skipper of that fine craft out in the stables?"

"Guilty," she said, raising one hand. "Will you ride her some day, Captain? Only be sure to let me know in time to reverse the saddle."

"Now what do you mean by that, you don't ride side-saddle?"

"No, but you see in order to feel quite at home you'd have to ride backwards for the steering gear is all in the bow." Ruth broke into a merry laugh, lightly vaulted the piazza rail and ran to the stables.

The captain watched her flying feet with beaming face and then he turned to grasp Mr. Sanderson's hand. "Do let those children run in whenever and just as often as they like. They're as good as an east wind on a hot sultry day."

"All right, Captain, I'll give them carte blanche, only if you get too much of them just let out a gentle hint."

Danny was put up in front of Ruth, and after Mrs. Frost had fed Bonny a lump of sugar, and appreciation of the pleasant ending to the day had been expressed by all the guests, Ruth urged Bonny close up to the rail where Mrs. Frost stood, and, leaning over, kissed her cheek. "There's only one thing that puzzles me and of which I don't quite approve," she said.

"And that is —?" asked Mrs. Frost.

"Why, your name doesn't seem to fit at all." It was a bewitching smile that Ruth cast over her shoulder as she turned Bonny's head toward home, Mr. Sanderson having already started.

Standing with her arm about her mother's waist Mary watched them go across the river, with happiness shining in her soft gray eyes. "The summer begins well, Mother," she said.

CHAPTER VIII

EVERY morning Danny and Dewey went through the same playful little struggle; Danny would come with flying feet to the kitchen, all fresh and rosy from his bath calling, "Dewey, Dewey, I wants mine juices!"

"All right, li'l Cap'n, but give Dewey one great big one first." This was said in a wheedling tone.

"No, Dewey, I wants mine juices." And Danny would stand on the defensive.

"Just one great big one, li'l Cap'n!"— determination and assurance manifest in her voice; then followed a scamper and a chase, with giggles from Danny and swoops and shrieks from Dewey. It always ended in the capture of Danny, quite frequently by the seat of his knickerbockers, and the one great big one was taken right in Danny's neck just underneath his shining, clinging curls.

Danny would stamp his little foot as soon as he could get control of that member and manage to hit the floor with it and exclaim: "I'm mad of you, Dewey, and don't love you any more."

But he had to refute this statement, which he was always ready to do, with a radiant smile, before he got the orange juice and was at liberty to run out and play with his express cart until father and Ruffles returned from their early morning dip.

As the cottage was almost hidden by a grove of pine trees, and the last one on the point of land running out to separate the bay on the left from the tidal river which runs by on the right, the seclusion made it possible to slip right into a bathing suit and take a plunge before dressing for breakfast, and Ruth and her father thoroughly enjoyed this early morning bath.

It had been a part of the summer plan that they were to live a very simple life; so Dewey, who was a fine cook, had agreed to do the greater part of the housework, with Ruth's help in the way of making beds and dusting. James would arrive soon with the automobile and he would manage the heavier work.

"Now, Dad," said Ruth at the breakfast table, the morning after their pleasant introduction to the Frost household, "we must lay out a sort of schedule for the day. Of course we needn't stick to the letter of the law, but just have a general idea of where we're at. After breakfast I'll have to be busy for about an hour

— sort of queer, isn't it? "— casting a sidelong glance at her father and wrinkling her saucy nose just a trifle, " and you can have Danny on your mind, if you please, and amuse yourselves any way you like. Then we'll go for a ride. Did you discover any nice bridle paths yesterday? "

" I discovered a good deal yesterday," replied her father, buttering one of Dewey's delicious breakfast rolls with unusual precision and care — a light in his eyes which was half a twinkle and half a thoughtful introspection. " Yes, I found an ideal road for Danny and Chrysanthemum; we'll go there this morning. You remember the woods just opposite Captain Frost's?— We turn off the road about there. The captain tells me it is perfectly safe for anyone to wander all about these woods." (Chrysanthemum, in case you haven't grasped the fact, is Danny's shaggy little pony. " Kissim " is what Danny calls him.)

" Until James arrives," Mr. Sanderson continued, " we'll have to take Danny a short ride first and then give Farmer Boy and Bonny a scamper later."

Ruth nodded. " We must rent two bath houses over on the beach, Father; it will be more fun for Danny to go in over there with other

children. Hadn't you and Danny better attend to that this morning while I am busy? Then after our ride we'll take Danny in for his bath. That disposes of the morning pretty well and in the afternoon after Danny's nap we'll motor all over the cape. How's that?"

"Sounds all right to me. I think we'll have to tack a sign up over the gateway, or over the entrance to the house as a sort of name for the cottage and call it Seldum Inn."

"Joy! Just the thing!" laughed Ruth; "I'll ask Miss Frost whom I can get to make a rustic sign. It doesn't sound particularly hospitable, but social calls should be tabooed in summer anyway and of course our friends will understand. It's so suggestive."

Turning to the youngest member of the family who was entirely absorbed in the business of breakfast, she said: "Don't talk so much Dannykins."

Danny's spoon was arrested half way between his mouth and his bowl of cereal, just long enough for his pearly teeth to gleam in a smile at his sister, and then continued to its destination. His concentrative power was well developed whether it was dropped eggs, or gobbies, under consideration.

You won't find the word "gobbie" in the

dictionary. Danny found it somewhere but nobody knows where.

By nine o'clock they were all in the saddle. When Chrysanthemum led the way Farmer Boy and Bonnie understood what was expected of them,— that considerable restraint must be put on lively animal spirits in order to adapt their pace to Kissim's. They always behaved remarkably well with only a side step or two now and then, an arching of the neck, and a playful pretense at shying just to vary the monotony. Being thoroughbreds they were possessed of a large amount of commonsense. "Noblesse oblige" is as much an instinct with fine animals as with men.

"Hullo," exclaimed Mr. Sanderson, "the house opposite the Frost's is open, somebody else has arrived."

"Several somebodies I should say," commented Ruth. "The place would be an object lesson to bees. Can it be all one family?"

Two large tents were in process of erection at the rear of the house; two young ladies were arranging Navajo rugs, chairs, couches and tables on the porch; two girl children were running about in the acre of meadow grass surrounding the house; while two of the windows showed signs of life within.

"Arithmetic must be taking a summer vacation, also, for two and two fail to make four this morning. Let's turn in at the Frosts' and find out who they are."

But Ruth's suggestion was unnecessary for Danny had spied the captain through the barn door and Chrysanthemum was already kicking up the dust of the Frosts' driveway.

The blood of the Revolutionary ancestor, for whom Danny was named, was especially assertive when stirred by the motion of the saddle and his military bearing and salute as he pulled up within a few feet of the captain's smile was something to see.

"Hello, Hello," the hearty voice rolled out, "here's a new member of the family. What's his name? Have you brought him over to play with Peter?"

Danny slowly shook his head with an expression of regret.

"He kicks sometimes. His name's Kissim."

"Kissim! Well, now, I shouldn't mind. He looks worthy of the demonstration. Good morning, Mr. Sanderson; good morning, Miss Ruth. I expect, now, Miss Ruth, you're on your way to the village to buy your fish basket?"

Ruth was quick to catch the fun in the captain's eye.

"Am I? And what shall I do with it when I get it?"

Turning, the captain pointed to a small group of fish houses down by the river side. "Every morning, or *nearly* every morning," he said in his slow, hearty, well-rounded enunciation, "the boats come in with fresh fish and when they are cleaned and ready for sale the American flag is run up on that flag pole. So whenever you see the flag flying down there you will know it's best to get down early with your basket if you want a good selection for dinner."

Ruth's blue eyes snapped with fun and amusement. She wheeled Bonny right about as though to lose no time—"How large a basket? And where do I get it?" she demanded.

"Oh, I forgot. You haven't been down to our department store yet. Well, there's only one and you can't miss it. You'll find most anything you want from grandmother's cookies to the latest thing in hair puffs. But the hair puffs are separated from the cookies by brass buttons and the cookies are under glass. The Vrai girls keep the store; they'll be mighty glad to see you. If you go through the woods you may meet Mary. She went to the Post Office."

Mr. Sanderson asked the captain if he knew who the people were across the road.

"Mother has gone over to see if we can lend a helping hand. I believe their name is Perry; youngish people, and they have two little children; then there's Mrs. Perry's sisters, and a maid. It looks like we'll have a nice lot of young people here this year. The Sterlings are coming to-morrow. They live up the road a bit, toward the beach."

Danny was edging toward the road. He didn't see Peter about anywhere and the conversation was not particularly enlivening. He guided Chrysanthemum over to the fence where the youngest child was clinging with tiny hands to the top rail, just the mischievous shining black eyes and the head of a Teddy Bear which was clutched under one arm showing above the fence rail. Danny rode quite close. They looked at each other solemnly as children do.

Standing back a little way under a willow tree, one hand twisted in the hem of her dress, her head lowered, shyly watching from a safe distance, the other child, a diminutive, dainty little lady looked from soft brown eyes.

"Where do you live?" inquired Miss Bright Eyes.

"Crawlerrado," announced Danny.

The black eyes sparkled and the corners of a rosebud mouth were pulled slightly down, and in, plainly saying they hoped the boy didn't catch on to the fact that their owner understood not at all.

"I've got a sand pile," she said; "come in and play."

"Can't."

Upstairs behind the muslin curtains one sweet, studious face, and one round, roly-poly one were interestedly watching the meeting.

"Ooh, hoo," called Ruth, as she and her father started for the woods.

Kissim scampered.

"What a stunning man," said Roly-poly.

"What a beautiful girl," said the studious one.

CHAPTER IX

THE bridle path was wide; the sun splashed down through the pine trees, now lighting with a dazzle the gold of Danny's uncovered hair; now touching with a caress the boyish pucker of Ruth's mouth as she whistled softly, answering the bird calls from the fluttering, feathered, busy little nest builders, who so cunningly shield themselves from view and yet surprise you with a clear, rollicking warble close at hand; and again, bringing out forcibly the strong, clear-cut profile of Mr. Sanderson's splendid head. Every now and then the presence of some wild thing was made known by the rustling of last year's leaves — likely a rabbit.

Ruth remarked how queer it was to find sand everywhere, even mixed with pine needles in the midst of the woods. The woods on the cape are not like those on the North Shore; the trees do not grow to great size and the wide paths often stretch in several directions, showing vistas of light and shadow, with patches of blue sky, and the sand of the pathways glistening white.

Suddenly, from out the distance of the road on which they were, a woman came running in great haste. Mr. Sanderson drew up, shading his eyes with his hand; then, at a word, Farmer Boy sprang forward.

"My dear Miss Frost, something has happened! can I help?" Mr. Sanderson put strength, encouragement and comfort in his voice as he sprang to the ground.

"It is — fire — on the edge — of the wood," she said between her panting breaths. "I was going for more help — there are only two men to fight it."

"Ruth," said her father, "ride quickly back to the captain, tell him there is fire, show him the direction and he will know what to do."

Ruth and Bonny were off like a whirlwind.

Then of Mary he asked, looking searchingly in her eyes, "Would you have any fear in mounting Farmer Boy?"

"No, indeed," she replied with confidence; "but — looking at her skirt in confusion — "how can I?"

"Quickly, please," he urged, and taking her hand he placed it to grasp the saddle; then he made a stirrup of his hands for her foot and she was up, her skirt deftly and carefully arranged before she had time to draw back.

"Farmer Boy is perfectly gentle. Will you see Danny safely home?" he asked, placing the reins in her hand, with just a lingering touch of transmitted strength as his own closed over it for a second.

"And you?" she inquired.

"Shall I have any difficulty in finding the place?"

"Follow this path and take the first turn to the left."

"I wants to go, too!" pleaded Danny, as his father was turning away.

"Little son, we couldn't leave a lady to ride alone when there is danger. Will you take my place and see that no harm comes to her?"

Danny threw out his little chest and brought Chrysanthemum alongside of Farmer Boy. "Don't be 'fraid," he said in a reassuring tone, looking up at Mary so far above him, "I won't let anyfing hurt you," and the sweetness and manly bravery of the baby face made Mary long to snatch him to her arms; for there was a wistfulness in it, too, as he watched his father's clean, swinging motion as he ran swiftly away.

Mary's heart was stirred with a variety of emotions: she had ridden before and was not afraid — but the fire! — the worst menace the natives have to dread! There is so little to fight

it with. . . . The man who had just left her seemed strong enough to cope with anything — a masterful man — and she looked at her hand. She felt a feminine satisfaction in the knowledge that her ankles were slim and shapely, and she hoped she'd not meet anyone she knew, for no situation, in the minds of the residents would warrant her riding a man's saddle in an ordinary dress skirt, she was sure of that.

Presently she was startled from her thoughts by a loud whinny from Farmer Boy as Ruth came into view, riding free, and clutching an ax and a spade. Mary and Danny had just time to pull aside as Bonny tore past. This made Farmer Boy a little restive; there was some excitement in the wind and why should he, a horse of spirit, have to amble tamely away from any deed of daring!

There followed several men running with brooms, and more axes and spades; and finally the captain who was too large a man to run.

The fire had gained considerable headway when Mr. Sanderson reached the spot and he saw that not much could be accomplished till more help came. But he tore off his coat and wrenched a branch from a tree to beat the flames, and he worked hard and fast. When Ruth came riding up he seized the ax and spade,

casting her a look of love and pride. "Ride to the village and send more men, dear!"

There was no time for caution. Ruth was turning sharp curves from path to path in reckless fashion; the soft sand deadened the hoof beats, and it was a very undignified leap that a tall young man had to take as she swerved round unexpectedly breaking in upon his meditations and landing him in the blueberry bushes.

Ruth herself almost lost her seat, for Bonny shared the surprise.

"Steady, girl, steady! Quiet, Bonny! We must go back and apologize." Her cheeks which were red before were glowing now, and her hair had escaped from the band of ribbon and was dancing in the wind.

The young man still sat where he landed, hugging his knees and watching, with sang froid, this wild rider get control of her steed.

Riding slowly back Ruth bent over to hide her laughter, pretending to fix her stirrup. "Oh, he did look so funny!" she whispered to Bonny. Aloud she said: "I do hope you are not hurt! We trust you will pardon us."

"No, indeed — that is to say — certainly! I mean — I am not hurt and there's nothing to pardon. 'Twas just a bit sudden, that's all."

He picked himself up, flicking the clinging leaves from his trousers with his handkerchief. Then looking up at Ruth with a quizzical smile he went on, "But I'll attend to the villain when he comes along — I assume there is one pursuing you. Or are you just playing at Arethusa?"

He had entirely recovered his nonchalance and was wondering, as he recognized Ruth's rare beauty, where he had seen her before.

"Excuse me for asking," he said, "but do you always ride like that?"

A merry peal of laughter echoed through the woods, but it was cut short with the memory of her errand. Then she surprised him a second time by riding off at a gallop, calling back over her shoulder: "The woods are on fire." She pointed to her left. "They need your help."

He stood with his feet wide apart, his hat in one hand, smoothing his back hair with the other, and apostrophized the woods:

"That will do for a beginning — one shock at a time, please. H'm, now for the fire." He pulled himself together and started off at a jog trot.

Richard Huntington had left the buckboard to carry his baggage on to the hotel and had elected to find his way through the quiet of the

woods: "Nice, drowsy little place, this," and his grin had a fine touch of subtle humor.

Ruth called into service every man she met who could possibly leave whatsoever he happened to be doing at the moment. She inspired the laziest with energy; she animated the most negligent with an unwonted interest in the common good. Such is the great influence of youthful beauty and vitality that men flew to do her bidding. They all knew what was needed. It wasn't the first time they had been called upon for a similar service.

When Richard reached the spot all those who had been first summoned were working with a will and none stopped to question, even in thought, who the strange, broad-shouldered athlete might be when he slipped into the place where the need of fierce struggle was most urgent. The captain took command of the forces and as new volunteers appeared he called out orders in a voice which could be heard above the crackling of the burning branches and the blows of shovel, spade or ax. He did his utmost to get the fire circled. Passing a spade to Richard he commanded him to shovel sand on the creeping ground-fire.

The captain looked anxiously toward a little house on the edge of the wood, not far from the

fiercest heat. The wind was blowing in that direction and he concentrated all his strength now to save that little house if possible, for the danger was imminent.

"Oh, for a good stream of water!" groaned Richard, exasperated by the inadequacy of his efforts to smother the flames, although he was doing excellent work, his shovel loading and unloading with quick regularity.

After a while he stopped a second to straighten his back and relax his muscles, thereby conserving his strength. His glance was arrested by the sight of two women standing with clasped hands close to the little house, as though they would protect it with their lives; — tall, gaunt, and wide-eyed, undoubtedly paralyzed by fright and overcome by the impending calamity which threatened them.

"Jove! The pathos of it! — When a man battles with the elements he's up against it!" So muttering, Richard was bending again with renewed determination when he saw a horse and rider dash round from the rear of the house; a girl spring to the ground, tether the horse out of danger, rush up to the two women, and then, in a minute, all three turn toward the house.

"That's all right, and just in the nick of time," commented Richard. "There are some

compensations even for the worst that may happen!"

At times it looked as though the men might win when the wind died down for a short while; and then the hungry flames would leap higher than ever, rushing, reaching, and gasping for the next tree victim.

Ruth's heart was filled with pity at the sight of the thin, hopeless faces of the women. But she was a child of action and her youth was undaunted.

"Come," she cried, "you must be on the safe side and get all the things you can from the house to that clearing over there, and I'll help you,— come!"

Slowly and in a daze the women followed Ruth into the house.

"Now, then, pick out the most important things first — where shall we begin? Here's a nice old rush-bottomed chair; I'll take that out while you're getting things together."

"Why, child," exclaimed the older of the two, "that there cheer is as old's the hills. I don't never remember the time when we didn't hev it. Gran'ther Simpkins allers set to the table in that cheer."

"Yes, of course," said Ruth breezily, "I'll save it first of all." She picked up the chair

and was off out of the door toward the clearing before the astonished women could offer a suggestion.

"Well, I declare, Sarah, she's a real pretty, bright-lookin' girl, but don't seems though she can hev much sense. You stay right here and tell her what to take next."

"Yes, Susan, I'll give her this pair o' pink vases that we got down to the Fair at Barnstable two year ago, soon's she comes back."

The one addressed as Susan picked up a gaudy red plush rocker and staggered out through the door with it.

When Ruth came running back Sarah handed out the pink vases.

"Oh, but haven't you got some valuable papers — and things?" she asked.

"Why, that's so; — here, wait a minute."

Ruth watched her disappear through a door. Then she held the impossible pink vases at arm's length. "Poor things!" she said under her breath, and it is not unreasonable to question whether she referred to the vases or the women. She took an impatient step or two toward the door through which she now heard returning footsteps, but started back as Sarah emerged with a step ladder.

"Just a minute, dear — I'm so glad you re-

minded me of it," and Sarah proceeded to place the step ladder close to the wall, mounted, and removed a framed document. "There, dear, it's mother's marriage certificate. Now you run along with those."

Just here Ruth made up her mind that something desperate must be done if anything really worth while was to be saved. She ran to the door and exclaimed in a horrified voice that the flames were getting very near. "I think," she said, "that we'll all have to take right hold and carry things as fast as we can. Here, you take these and I'll get something else." She gently urged the poor, frightened woman toward the door. Then she ran hurriedly through the rooms, took sheets and blankets from the beds and spread them on the floor; removed clothing from the closets and added any light articles that could be thrown in with them, made a bundle and tied it up. She surprised Susan very much by meeting her at the door and telling her to carry that out; which Susan meekly proceeded to do.

"Lor' sakes, what you got there?" asked her sister in passing. Susan gave her a queer little one-sided smile. "I don't know, but you better go right along and maybe you can tell better than I what you are getting next."

Ruth had now dominated the situation. Somehow she managed to meet the sisters each time at the door until she decided it didn't much matter what came next and then she herself began to remove such articles of furniture as her young strength could manage.

At last all was done that seemed feasible. The sisters looked at their belongings heaped up and bundled together there in the open field. Then their gaze wandered back to the little house. They saw one of the men rush toward it and — was that? — Yes, a tiny flame creeping along the edge of the roof was now plainly visible. The older sister sank with a sob in the nearest chair and Susan fell on her knees, burying her head in Sarah's lap.

Sadly Ruth turned her back, hesitated, and then slowly walked to where Bonny was tied, and mounted. "Tread softly, Bonny, there are hearts in trouble; we've done all we can now, old girl, but Captain Frost will know what is best to do next. If only the little house had had the sense to stand on the further side of the road which skirts the edge of the wood instead of cuddling so confidingly close!"

In spite of the morning of excitement and exertion, there wasn't a droop in any part of Ruth's splendid, well-trained body, but she rode

slowly, the reins lying loose, and Bonny trod softly as she was told, picking her dainty footsteps in the yielding surface of sand and pine needles, her beautiful tail swinging rhythmically back and forth in unison with the motion of her sleek body.

Ruth's arms were folded, and her head thrown slightly back to catch the spatters of sunlight sifting down through the trees. Her deep blue eyes were thoughtful; how joyous, tranquil and unconcerned she and dad and Danny had set out over this same path earlier in the morning! This led her to wonder if her own special responsibility was behaving himself like a little gentleman — her little curly-haired sunbeam. "We must take him round to brighten up the two lonely women very soon, Bonny, mustn't we?" But where — where would poor helpless Susan and Sarah be? A glance over her shoulder showed the smudge of smoke lying low over the trees yonder. It would be easy enough to stop the progress of the fire after it had consumed the little house; of that she felt sure, with the force of men at work. And then with a little expressive twinkle of amused surprise it occurred to her that she had failed to notice whether the young 'man, so wondrous wise, who jumped into a bramble

bush, and fortunately didn't scratch out both his eyes,' had joined the fire-fighters or not.

"Bonny!" The mare stopped, turned her graceful head and pointed ears in questioning surprise. "Bonny," Ruth repeated, playfully shaking her finger at the white star on Bonny's forehead, "just think of that fetching straw hat sailing through the air and landing yards away from its lawful owner; and those light gray flannel trousers — supposing the blueberries had been ripe, what then?" A rippling, rollicking laugh set a red squirrel scuttling off in indignant fright.

"Now, Bonny, if you are sufficiently impressed with the possible results of a *faux pas* you may proceed."

There was a telepathic sympathy between Bonny and her rider, and it was an almost imperceptible touch that set the mare off at a smart trot, for Danny had been out of sight full long enough.

CHAPTER X

HAD Ruth remained in the clearing just a few minutes longer she would have realized that the fate of the gray flannel trousers was not wholly determined by the consideration of the blueberry bushes. It was Richard who ran toward the little house, calling to others to follow. It was Richard who shinned up the post of the little porch, swung himself up to the gutter and gingerly crept along till within arm's length of the greedy, lapping, though at present very small, flames; he called to the men to throw him a hatchet, which after two or three unsuccessful attempts landed where he could catch it. He didn't put much confidence in the gutter, but he had to risk it. So leaning half his weight on the roof with his left hand, with his right he swung the hatchet, every blow of which sent the burning shingles flying, and these in turn were beaten out by the men below. It seemed almost like wasted time, for surely it would catch again somewhere else. But is splendid effort ever wasted, so long as there is a ray of hope? As if in answer to

the unexpressed thought and undaunted determination of the fighters, the wind shifted just a few points. With exultation the men took renewed hope; one more hour's good struggle and the victory was won; the last flickering flame was extinguished.

The tired men gathered in groups, wiping their heated faces, for they were a sorry sight. Perspiration and smoke had smooched and streaked and smutted.

"H'm," thought our friend Richard, "I'm like to make an impressive introduction at a hotel. Fortunately for me it is early in the season yet and the lorgnette artillery will not be in active service; but it is safe to predict that the bell-boys won't tumble over themselves in their desire to show me to my room. I can see the rascals now: a dig in the ribs with an elbow, a fearful contortion of one eye, a tongue in the right cheek — 'no tips, but tipsy, eh?'"

Picking up his coat he stopped to survey the men standing in groups and gesticulating while they surmised as regards the origin of the fire. "Ten to one it's them old blueberry pickers," growled one, "an' somethin'd ought ter be done about it." (It was a known fact that where the bushes are burned out in the spring the summer crop of berries is the largest.)

Then Richard's eye lighted on Mr. Sanderson and Captain Frost.

"Well, I shan't be the only gentleman tramp to walk the streets," he muttered with satisfaction.

Then he moved closer to these two.

"By Jumping Jupiter! — I believe it's — well, of all the luck, of course it is! And now I know where I saw the goddess. But who is the past-hero of the crested wave he's talking to? Can't be — Oh, I say! I'll certainly have to take something for my nerves if this sort of thing keeps up. Here I've only been in this remote little hamlet an hour or so and I've narrowly escaped death through being run over by a goddess; I've joined the fire-brigade; and now, if I listen hard I think I can hear the sprouting of a budding detective within my being. I'll test this germinating talent."

He carefully shook and beat his coat, dusted his smart straw hat as best he could and sauntered over to the two gentlemen in question. He addressed himself to the older man: "I beg pardon, sir, but can you direct me the nearest way to the Hotel Bay View?"

"Gladly, young man.— You are a stranger here?" asked the captain as he offered his hand with the strong grip of good-fellowship.

Richard nodded in answer to the question. "I am but just arrived, although you'd never guess it from my appearance," with a deprecating gesture and a good-humored laugh.

"Well, sir, you have allowed no time to pass before making our interests yours; let me thank you heartily. And here's Mr. Sanderson, too, only been here a few days. May I introduce you to Mr. Sanderson of Colorado?"

Richard lifted his hat. "I am Richard Huntington, from Salem, and glad to meet you," — including both men in a graceful bow.

"Richard Huntington!" exclaimed the captain. "Well, now, I might have known it; I'm more than ever glad to see you, sir. My daughter Mary has told me much about you, but she was not aware you were coming so soon. Welcome to Harwich, my boy." The captain's face beamed with pleasure as he placed both hands on Richard's shoulders. Their eyes were on a level, and both were big men; but as Captain Frost had begun to stoop a trifle at the shoulders, he must have been the taller man at Richard's age. "My wife will be so glad to meet you and hear from her old and much-loved home."

Mr. Sanderson was puzzled by an unaccount-

able feeling of discomfort all of a sudden. He glanced up to see if a cloud had crossed over the sun, for certainly a shadow had passed over something. It was an indefinable feeling. Perhaps he was just hungry after the unaccustomed physical exertion.

You would scarcely find three more striking-looking men together anywhere. The struggle with the elements, and often with men, which inevitably falls to the lot of sea-faring men, had left its stamp of a conqueror on the hale and hearty ex-captain; Mr. Sanderson was a finished product of enlightenment and discipline acquired by mental and moral training, which the dictionary defines as culture; he had all the ease and grace of a man of the world, and withal, a normal, healthy, virile personality; while Richard was especially noticeable for his spendid physique, an open, wholesome, boyish face, a ready wit, and generally optimistic outlook on life.

Captain Frost started Richard on the right path for the hotel after extracting a promise from him to show himself at the old white house at the very earliest possible moment. The captain and Mr. Sanderson remained to superintend the replacing of the household gods for Miss Susan and Miss Sarah, whose tears had turned

to smiles, and their anguish of heart was replaced by silent prayers of thanksgiving.

Richard was wondering, as he strolled once more through these most astonishing woods, where that will-o'-the-wisp of a girl had disappeared to.

Now the will-o'-the-wisp of a girl was again perched on the piazza rail, facing a most interested audience of four to whom she told the tale of the morning, supposing that the little house was by this time enveloped in flames and that the men were giving all their attention to stopping the progress of the fire at the edge of the meadow. Ruth was giving them a vivid picture of all the events from the moment when she passed Mary and Danny on her wild ride, and you may be sure that the morning's excitement lost no jot of interest in her telling of it.

Danny listened with wide eyes. He was comfortably relaxed on dear Mrs. Frost's motherly lap as she gently rocked to and fro, occasionally running her fingers through the golden curls just for the pleasure of seeing them spring back and coil yet closer to Danny's head.

"I wonder who that young man could possibly be—" pondered Mary. She and her mother had exchanged glances of keen enjoyment and

appreciation when Ruth, her face alive with mischievous enjoyment, came to the recital of the contretemps at the sharp bend of the woodland path. Eunice threw her apron over her head, alternately bending and straightening in a really painful fit of mirth.

But Danny said, "I hope you telled that young man you was sorry, Ruffles."

"Yes, I did, Dannykins. I rode back and told him I hoped he wasn't hurt, and that he'd pardon us. And he replied, 'No indeed — certainly — that is to say —'" and Ruth chuckled merrily again.

Danny looked more solemn yet and thoughtfully announced, "Well, I can't quite seem to get my head froo that, Ruffles; p'raps he's French."

He was slightly disgruntled at the effect of his last remark. Older people had such a queer way of laughing when there really was nothing to laugh at.

The sparkles disappeared, however, from Ruth's eyes, and consternation and pity filled the minds of Mary and her mother as Ruth progressed.

"Mother!" exclaimed Mary. "It's Susan and Sarah Simpkins' house; there will be no insurance, nothing! They will be utterly ruined."

"Land o' love, Mis' Frost, of all the people in the hul town ain't they the very last ones should be left to stand on their own feet?" queried Eunice.

Danny had been forgotten for the time being. No one noticed that the lips of his sensitive little mouth had been quivering for several minutes and the corners drooping ominously; so the storm of his grief burst without any warning. Rushing across the piazza to Ruth he flung himself in a very abandonment of childish sorrow. He threw his head back, uttering piercing wails and screams; he stamped his feet; for when grief broke the bounds of Danny's self-control there was a tempest indeed. If Ruth had noticed, she could have averted it but she had not seen.

This was a new and totally unexpected aspect of Danny to Mrs. Frost and Mary. They felt utterly helpless and uncomprehending.

Ruth placed her hands on Danny's shoulders, gently pushed him back a step and commanded him to stop at once. He gazed up at his sister through the glistening, streaming tears, his little body shaking with the violence of his sobs.

"I don't want —" he screamed— "I don't want — that — house — to burn down!" Again he stamped his foot in baffled rage.

"Ruffles — Ruffles —" he screamed in a sharp crescendo, "they won't have any — bed — to sleep in!" Then he buried his face in her skirts.

Ruth calmly picked up the shaking little figure, carried him to the further end of the piazza, sat down and held him close for a minute. Then she said, her mouth close to his ear, "Danny, hush! I want to talk to you." Very slowly the sobs quieted and came farther and farther apart.

"Now, Danny, listen. What good does it do for you to scream like that? That won't help those ladies any, will it? We must talk it over and see if there is anything we can do to help. Let's go home to Dewey and we'll plan something, shall we?"

In less than a minute Danny was all smiles, even while the tears still stood large and shining, trembling on the edge of his curling lashes till he drew his chubby hand across and wiped them all away.

They bade good-by to their friends and scampered home to wait for father who would help them think what could be done for poor Miss Susan and Miss Sarah.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN dad did return with the good news that the house was saved, Ruth was a trifle surprised, after Danny's first look of pleasure, to see a shade of disappointment sweep over his expressive features. But his father's next remark brought instant relief to whatever thought had so suddenly sobered him. Which remark was to the effect, that it was a puzzle to imagine how two women ever managed to live under their present circumstances; that they looked thin and ill-fed; and he wondered how it would be possible to give two women like that an impetus to achieve greater things.

Danny now paid his whole attention to the business of dinner which Dewey was serving. He ate with his accustomed appetite, but by the time the last spoonful of dessert was swallowed his eyes were heavy with sleep.

"Son, let's go take a nap, the morning's exercise has made me sleepy." Saying which, Mr. Sanderson swung Danny to his shoulder and marched off up-stairs, leaving Ruth to her own devices. Should she stay at home and just

be lazy, or should she take a book, go over to the beach and bask in the sun and the sand? She picked up from the table in the living-room Hopkinson Smith's "Peter," walked to the piazza rail, and let her glance rove up and down the picturesque banks of the river. Her decisions were never long in the making, and now, after scanning both shores, she tucked "Peter" firmly under her right arm and sallied forth.

To get to the beach from the point where they were it was necessary to walk back to the bridge and then practically retrace one's steps on the other side of the river. "That's another thing we must have," she thought; "a boat to go over and back, for this is a waste of time; it's quite a long way round."

For a wonder the air was still. There was a brooding, sunny silence all about. Ruth appeared to be the only human being in sight. She was always very much alive, wide awake, keenly interested in all nature.

"I wonder," she thought, "if I could find any clay along the river? I'd like to make a model of the entrance and doorway of the Frost house some day. I'll follow along the river bank and see."

All went well as long as she was on their own side, but after crossing the bridge, had she con-

tinued on up to the road as was the custom of pedestrians, she would have seen a sign announcing that "trespassing was forbidden"; so, all unconsciously, she was disobeying a mandate.

She found a spot where she was quite sure she could get the clay at low tide, but concluded she would come over some morning with a suitable receptacle for it. Then she bent her steps in the direction of the beach and with the swinging stride of a mountain-climber was making good time. Swishing through the sedges she startled a blue heron, and stood to watch its flight; then on again, and it was some time before she realized the soil was getting spongy. But she plodded on. Finally, standing on one foot she lifted the other to see if she was getting uncomfortably wet. "This is rather bad," she concluded. "I'd best be looking about me to pick and choose my footing."

But matters were getting worse instead of better. With each step she was finding it difficult to pull her feet out; and had she worn low shoes instead of high boots, they would certainly have been lost in the mud.

"The longest way round next time for yours truly," she thought.

The very next step was calamitous; she simply couldn't pull her foot out. Whenever she

leaned to one side, endeavoring to loosen the other foot, the one she bore her weight on sank still deeper. The mud was up to the tops of her boots now, and slowly, very slowly, she felt them being sucked still deeper. She tried to brace herself with her hands, but they, too, would sink in. She tried pulling herself by the sedges. There was no solid thing on which she could get any purchase to help raise herself. Looking swiftly all around she found it was no use to call for help for there was no one in sight and the fish houses, not far off, were apparently deserted. Then she had a brilliant thought: "Peter," the book, was still tucked under her arm. Opening it in the middle she laid it flat down and with both hands spread out upon it made an almost superhuman effort and slowly but surely, one after the other, was able to extricate her feet. This was a slow way of progressing, but by means of repeating this operation she finally got to where the footing was possible once more.

With dismay she surveyed her feet, legs and skirts. The book, too, was soaked, and dripping, and warped.

"My, but I'm a tragedy!" she exclaimed. And little she knew what a narrow escape from real tragedy she had just experienced, for she

had been in *quick mud* and "Peter," always gallantly ready to serve others, had really saved her life.

"After the deluge, what?" she asked herself, with the quizzical expression that always brought out her dimples. "I'll have to change my mind about basking in the sun, for I have no desire to bake into a mud cast. Although, strange to relate, I have met nobody on the way, I have a distaste to going back over the road and running any chances in that direction. I must try and bribe somebody to row me back."

Dripping mud at every step she walked to the fish houses to see if by chance there might possibly be someone around a corner. Although she could see nobody she thought she heard a whistle. "Where is the boy?" she puzzled, for getting nearer she distinctly heard all the notes of the popular air of the day:

"Every little movement has a meaning all its own— Every thought and feeling by some gesture can be shown."

The fish houses were built to overhang the river, with just a narrow planking on the river side where the fishermen landed the fish from the boats alongside.

It so happened that after luncheon Richard

Huntington had sauntered down here to smoke his cigar and was sitting on this planking, his knees drawn up and hands clasped about them, idly speculating on the possibilities of the place, also as to which house his new acquaintances might be living in, and thoroughly enjoying the soft, dreamy air of the whole place.

"Now I'm getting warm," said Ruth in a self-congratulatory tone, for at last she placed the source of the whistle to her satisfaction as coming from the rear of the middle fish house, and in her usual breezy way, expecting to find a boy with a fish line, she stepped briskly round the corner of the house. Unfortunately the planking was narrow and the apparition confronting her was so utterly unlike her expectations that she took a step backward, a little too far to the right, lost her balance and fell with a splash into the river below.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Richard. There was no time for anything else but a frantic effort to find a rope or an oar. His quick instinct told him this was better than jumping in himself; and sure enough a good coil of rope lay close at hand.

He did not know, although he might easily have surmised, that Ruth was a strong swimmer. She covered the distance to a dory moored near

by without an effort and was pulling herself up over the rail just as he reached over with the rope. He had thrown himself flat, to get a better reach with both hands, and found himself gazing down at a merry, upturned face. Ruth, shaking the water from her hair and eyes, merrily laughed at his astonished face and comical position; then she coolly announced that as long as she was in she might as well wash off some of the mud. She proceeded to place herself in the stern of the dory where she could conveniently dangle her legs in the water.

"My dear young woman," declared Richard with clerical solemnity, "your worst enemy could never accuse you of being bromidic."

"That's all right," she acquiesced with a hearty peal of laughter, "but anyway, I consider we are even now; although if it had not been for the fact that I needed a bath, you would be slightly in my debt according to my judgment."

Richard swung himself up to a sitting posture and relit his cigar.

"Providence seems to have ordained that we become acquainted," he insinuated, "albeit her method of introduction is slightly unconventional and a trifle violent. I judge you had been clamming. Did you have any luck?"

Ruth now unfastened the painter, picked up an oar in the bottom of the dory, stood up and with her sweetest smile assured him that she was really very sorry for having disturbed his meditations and interrupted his cigar. "As for the clams," she said, "I only found one stuck in the mud and I did have some difficulty in getting it out." Then with a little nod, and a strong sweep of the arms, using the oar as a paddle she headed the dory toward her own side of the river.

"Elusion number three," mentally tabulated by our friend Richard, who took no shame to himself for following Ruth with his eyes; the wet, clinging garments revealed the lithe, girlish figure full of strong curves, and trained by right-living.

"You don't find that kind on the hotel piazza," he mused. And once more he fell into a position of indolent physical enjoyment. Anyway he would give himself the satisfaction of seeing where she went. So he watched her through the slight haze of his own cigar smoke till she landed, secured the dory, and wended her way through the pine grove to the house on the point.

"Ah!" was all the comment he made. He flicked the end of the cigar into the river, rose,

shook himself, then stooped to pick up a hitherto unnoticed and neglected, very dilapidated-looking book. He opened it: "Peter —'um "— and with it returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER XII

NOT all the days which followed were as eventful as the past twenty-four hours, for after all it is seldom that the unexpected really does happen. It was evening of the sixth day and the Lady Moon was exercising her privilege of looking down upon, and peeking into the windows of the three homes with which we have the most to do in this, our story.

Poor Richard didn't count. He was obliged to put up with the cold, bare, impersonal apartment of a modern summer hotel in which the Lady Moon took small interest. Just now she was especially busy touching up the threads of silver which rippled and glistened above the smooth, wide, benign brow of Danny's beloved "Auntie Frost" (for their friendship had reached to that point by this time).

Not having the power of the Lady Moon to envelop with a soft radiance the three homes at one and the same time, we can only follow a few rays, as we may. The feathery foliage of the old willow tree at the corner of the Perry's piazza stirred sleepily now and again, causing

these special rays of the Lady Moon to dance and play among the silver threads lovingly. For Auntie Frost had stepped across the road to have a little chat with Marion Perry when she should be free.

Most of the cottages were rather primitive; that is to say, with few modern conveniences, but cosy and comfortable. The house the Perry's occupied was no exception to the general rule; but it had the redeeming feature of a wide, comfortable piazza which ran the whole length of the house and faced toward the large meadow which was the children's playground. Near either corner the old willow trees cast a pleasant shade for the eyes, and Mr. Perry had brought up several loads of sand which he put under the tree in the rear for the children's benefit. The piazza was used as a living-room, none of the household having any use for the inside of four walls during the summer time, except just three times a day when their ravenous appetites lured them in.

It had only been a matter of a few days before the Sandersons, Frosts, Perrys and Sterlings, including Dorothea and Betty Marsh, Mrs. Perry's sisters, felt as though they had known each other always. It was an unusually congenial group — no spoilsport among them.

Scarcely a day passed without their all getting together somewhere. They adopted a signal code and by means of a huge fog horn, produced from the captain's treasures, were able to send such messages as: "We are all at the Perry's, come along"— this was two blasts. Three toots signified: "If you don't want to miss the fun, beat it for the Sterling's casino," etc.

Mrs. Perry was young, short, plump, and very jolly. She had bewitching little mannerisms that won all hearts. Dorothea was rather serious, a great reader and something, too, of a dreamer. While Betty was a bunch of good nature and happy irresponsibility, a lover of sports, especially dancing. Mr. Perry had to bear considerable fun-poking on acount of the preponderance of the gentler sex in his household.

Elise and Nancy Perry, little Howard Sterling and Danny made sand pies, played house, or express, quarreled and made up and had a good time generally.

Whenever it was necessary for one of the older members of the family to step in and straighten things out, wipe away tears, or reprimand, the bone of contention was pretty sure to be traced to little Miss Nancy, for the amount

of her vitality to the square inch was out of all proportion to the size of her small body.

It was a great relief to Marion Perry when she tucked Nancy up for the night (as she was at the present moment doing) and could feel that for about twelve hours at least the active muscles would be in repose.

With a bright smile she came out to greet her neighbor. "Now Mrs. Frost, come right over here and sit in the most comfortable chair and we'll see if those kiddies will go to sleep." Mrs. Perry gently pushed her new friend into the most roomy and cushiony rocker.

"You see," she continued, drawing up a low chair for herself, so she wouldn't have to speak loud, "at home they have separate rooms, but it's more convenient here to put them in the same room. Elise is not very strong and rather nervous; she needs all the sleep she can get, but that little monkey of a Nance likes to talk. Oh, she's such a handful!"

"They are darling children, my dear. I don't know that I ever knew so lively a child as Nancy. Captain Frost has completely lost his heart to her. He frequently calls me to come and watch her. 'Mother,' he'll say, 'twill do you good to rest a minute and observe that personification of perpetual motion. Look at those

feet! They never walk, they fairly twinkle.' And he's never so happy as when he is walking out to see the hens, with Nancy holding one hand and Danny the other. It's come to be a regular thing now for them to come over and help feed the chickens."

The windows of the children's bedroom opened directly upon the further end of the piazza, and a smothered squeal from Elise was now audible. She had a sweet, high-pitched, childlike voice, in contrast to Nancy's, which was low, strong and sometimes almost gruff, when she chose to make it so. Then in a minute or two the listeners heard a low, whispered growl from Nance with, "Here comes a mouse!" in highly dramatic accents.

The sixty-year old mother and the thirty-year old mother looked at each other with a merry understanding. Mrs. Perry walked over to the window.

"Nancy, why are you out of your crib?"

A conscious and caught-in-the-act giggle from Nancy.

"I think Teddy was hot, Mother." The ever-present Teddy Bear was as usual clasped in one arm, for Nance and Teddy were rarely separated.

"Get right back to bed, Nancy, and if you

get out again mother will have to punish you."

The little mother went back to her seat and silence reigned for quite a while.

"I suppose the clan have gone to the Post Office for the mail?" she inquired.

"Yes, indeed, they wouldn't miss that walk through the woods for anything. In fact, none of the cottagers ever think of sending anyone else for their mail nowadays, the young people having constituted themselves into a regular rural delivery. I tell Mary that she and Mr. Sanderson are quite as bad as the younger ones, for they go along, too."

"I don't blame them, if it wasn't for the kiddies I'd join the procession myself."

"My dear, any time you would like to go, just send for me and I'd be only too happy to sit with the children." Mrs. Frost, looking at the merry brown eyes opposite her, was thinking the little mother didn't look more than a girl herself.

Nancy now began to sing softly to herself, and pretty soon they heard, in an undertone:

"'Lise, are you going to sleep?"

Then a very faint and sleepy "Yes" in reply.

"No, you're not!" and Nancy's flippant voice was vibrant with assured authority.

Mrs. Perry started to rise, but Mrs. Frost

gently laid her hand on her knee. "Let me speak to them a minute," she pleaded.

She, in her turn, went to the open window.

"Nancy," she said, "if you and Elise will shut your eyes tight, and listen a little while, I think you will hear a Whip-poor-will."

She was obliged to step back to hide her laughing face when she heard Nancy whisper, "Don't you do it, 'Lise, you can hear just as well with them open."

Then she tried another tack — "Nancy, would you like to have Auntie Frost come in and sing you a song?"

Judging from the sound which accompanied the joyous "Yes," Nance must be making a spring board of her mattress.

Mrs. Perry nodded acquiescence to Mrs. Frost's questioning glance.

"Just one," she advised.

Nancy was standing in the middle of her crib, one little hand grasping her held-up nighty, Teddy still clutched in the other. Her round cheeks were brilliantly rosy, her saucy lips displaying two rows of tiny white teeth, and in her snapping black eyes there was no suggestion of sleep. The bewitching, dainty face was framed in a becoming Dutch cut.

Elise's shadowy eyes were like pansies. She

lay quietly in the big bed. But both the children looked their pleasure as Mrs. Frost came in.

She seated herself on the edge of the large bed where she was between the two children.

"Now, Nancy, lie down and cover Teddy up with the sheet."

There was something essentially soothing in the captain's wife's very presence. Just to see her moving about a room, quietly giving a touch here and there, moving some object to its better place, with an unruffled, unhurried grace, was a comforting experience. She would have made a wonderful nurse for the sick.

Now she talked a little to the children in a quiet, even tone, and then she said: "I'm going to sing you a song that I used to sing to my Mary when she was a little girl just like you. But you mustn't talk, or ask questions. I'll go sit by the window."

She bent over Nancy's crib, tucked the sheet up carefully and smoothly; passed a cool, soft hand over Nancy's forehead, kissed her, then kissed Elise, sat down by the window and began in a monotonous, sleepy sing-song:

"Oh where have you been, Billy Boy, Billy Boy?
Oh, where have you been, charming Billy?
I have been to see my wife, she's the pride of my life,
She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother.

How old is she, Billy Boy, Billy Boy
How old is she, charming Billy?
Three times six, four times seven, twenty-eight and eleven,
She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother."

And so on through all the verses: "How tall is she?"—"Can she make a cherry pie?"—making her voice softer and more sleepy with each verse, just humming drowsily at the end.

All was still and she tiptoed back to the evening air.

"It takes me back to old times," she whispered when Mrs. Perry tucked her hand through her arm and suggested that they walk to meet the "mens and peoples," as Danny would say.

"I'll just step round to the kitchen door and ask Nora to keep watch," said Mrs. Perry.

What a night! The Lady Moon continued to follow them. The air was still and clear, and the white road stretched off to a narrowing point between the shadowy pine woods on either hand.

"How do Dorothea and Betty enjoy sleeping in a tent?" asked Mrs. Frost.

"Oh, they love it. Nothing would hire me to sleep out of doors. Why, we killed a long black snake on the back porch just the other day. That is to say, the milkman did. I ran the other way. I should be thinking of snakes,

spiders, skunks and other awful things and never a wink of sleep would I get."

The night was so still they heard the gay troupe of young people long before they could see them.

"Where's the captain to-night, Mrs. Frost?"

"He and your husband are smoking pipes and telling yarns on our piazza steps."

"Jack is having such a good time down here; in fact we all love it," and Marion Perry gave a little squeeze to the arm she held.

"Now don't jump, dear," she said, "I'm going to give the call." She uttered a loud, clear yodel and immediately the answer came back from a dozen throats, and what sounded like an echo from the woods.

"Why, I never heard an echo here before," remarked Mrs. Frost.

The Lady Moon smiled as the noisy group of enthusiastic boys and maids closed in about the two matrons.

"Where are the rest of you?" laughingly inquired Marion Perry. "You don't seem to be so promiscuous as usual."

"Yes, I don't see my Mary," added Mrs. Frost. "And didn't Mr. Sanderson start out with you, too?"

"He did, madam. It's a very unpretty name

we have to call those two." Nat Sterling accompanied this statement with a solemn shake of the head. "It is with deep regret we have to say it spells, deserters."

"Why, where were they going?"

"Not going at all, madam," said Nat with a low bow. "Just naturally coming, only their thoughts seemed not of the earth, earthy, tonight. The moon had cast a spell upon them and they refused to come back by way of the road."

"That explains the echo then."

"Echo, madam?"

"Yes, as you came up the road and answered Mrs. Perry's call we heard what sounded like an echo from the wood."

Richard now gallantly offered his arm to Mrs. Frost as they all started on once more. "They should be about opposite us now, as the wood path follows the road at a zig-zag parallel," he proffered.

"I don't see Ruth, why isn't she here?" continued Mrs. Frost.

"They said that for some reason or other Danny was restless and she wouldn't leave him, but if you ask me I should say it was probably because I am here. Fate seems to be playing a little game of hide and seek with us. Here a

whole week has passed and I haven't met Miss Ruth Sanderson in any conventional understanding of the term yet. Whenever I appear she is either making her exit on a horse, in a boat, or in a cloud of dust cut up by her own motor-car."

"Why, then, isn't this your very chance? You know she's at home, seems to me I'd go right over and make sure of her if I were you."

Richard stopped, turned and looked down with a smile at the sweet face, so full of loving thought for all, which each of the young people had grown to love, and he stooped and kissed her cheek.

"A most excellent idea. But just as sure as I reach their door she'll disappear up the chimney."

Now all this time the mail was being delivered to the expectant cottagers, one or another of the group stopping at each house and leaving whatever was addressed to its occupants, and cheery words were exchanged, maybe through an open window, or over the piazza rail, or at the barn door.

When they reached the Perry's, Betty Marsh begged them to wait till she ran to her tent for a light wrap as it was growing cooler. The moonlight was sufficient and she wouldn't have

to stop to get a lantern. So they stood at the gateway while she ran back of the house. But in a second they heard her scream and come tearing back again.

"Mercy, there's a snake two yards long right at the back of the tent!" Her eyes were wide with excitement. "My heart's going just like a trip hammer."

"Get us a mallet and lantern quick!" cried Nat Sterling.

This done, Richard took the lantern, Nat the mallet, and stealthily they crept behind the tent, the rest waiting with bated breath till they heard the mallet fall with fierce blows.

"Ah, he's a beauty!" called Ronald Sterling as the two returned, Richard dragging the snake from his upward-stretched arm.

"Here, Miss Betty, he's yours," he said, advancing toward Betty Marsh who retreated in disorder.

"Don't, Mr. Huntington, please! I — I — please put him down. Are you sure he's dead?"

Richard laid him along the ground and holding the lantern close called, "Come and see for yourself."

Betty and Dorothea, clutching at each other's skirts, came falteringly forward, gradually drawing near enough to see the reptile clearly.

"Why, it's — it's — a trunk strap!" they exclaimed. And then such a shout went up as to bring a smile to many a face of the letter-readers a long way back on the road, and caused Marion Perry to rush to discover if her babies were frightened.

"Well, anyway," declared Nat, with doubtful satisfaction, "I smashed the tongue off even if it wasn't poisonous."

And how about the Lady Moon now? She had seen the silvery threads safely home, so she bethought herself of Mary and looked down through an opening in the pine trees straight into two upturned faces.

"Oh," said Mary, "aren't you acquainted with the lady in the moon?"

"A lady in the moon?" Mr. Sanderson's tone of voice was skeptical. "I always understood that mere man held full sway up there. I've seen him modeled in clay. Are you quite sure you see a lady?"

"There's not the slightest room for doubt," laughed Mary. "And she's a very beautiful lady, too, and young. I shall be happy to introduce you to her. She's always dressed for the evening, only you can't see her dress — just her exquisite head and a beautiful bare shoulder. Her profile is partly turned and she is bending

her head slightly to look down upon us. Her hair is wondrous soft and fluffy, rolled up to a knot on the top of her head, and it hides all but a tiny wee bit of her ear. The slope of her neck and shoulder is cut off by the lower edge of the moon and her pompadour comes very near the top. Now do you see her?"

"Why, of course. Just as plain as day. She's a modern lady, too. Well, isn't it strange that I've lived all these years and looked at the full moon month in and month out and never saw her before?"

"No, it's not so very strange. I had to have her pointed out to me, and many there are who are never able to see her even when she's fully described.

"De-lighted — I'm sure," smiled the Lady Moon as the two turned their backs, vanishing into the shadowy depths of the pathway, where Mary's soft, white draperies made a spot of high light slowly receding till it was lost to view.

"And now I must kiss Danny good night," murmured the Lady Moon, shimmering over the tree-tops, twinkling across the river and slanting down through the deep, open window to dance in Danny's curls, and with the aid of the flickering light of the wood fire on the hearth to create

a satisfying, yet tantalizing picture for Richard's sole and special benefit.

Hands in pockets, and without his customary cheery whistle — as a means of precaution 'gainst giving Fate any warning of his approach — he sauntered up from the gateway, with a sly wink at the "Seldum Inn" sign. He trod softly over the grass. Hearing voices, he made straight for the long open window. But the sight it revealed gave him pause.

Seated in the ingle-nook Ruth and Danny were crooning nursery rhymes, while Ruth held Danny's bare, pink toes to the warmth of the blaze. The two heads were close together, the russet-bloom of Ruth's cheek softly resting against Danny's sunny curls. He was warmly wrapped in a little light blue bath robe, making a delightful bit of color against the pure white of Ruth's simple muslin frock. Seated on the floor directly in front, her hands clasped about her knees was Dewey, her dusky face shining with undoubted love and adoration for little Cap'n.

"Now, Ruffles, le's say 'Five little rabbits went out to walk,'" said Danny in a coaxing tone.

"But that must be the very last," replied Ruth, and her accent had a tone of finality.

"Will you go to bed then like a very, very good boy?"

"Ye-es," with a deep sigh of resignation.

So the story of the five little rabbits who "like to boast as well as talk" was repeated. At the close Danny bounced round to face Ruth, kneeling in her lap. "I'll say my prayers here, please."

"Very well."

Danny sat back on his heels, squeezed his eyes very tight shut, and rattled off, "Now I lay me." When he had finished invoking a blessing upon everyone he knew he ended with, "and please send enough to eat to those two poor womens in the woods." Ruth and Dewey exchanged glances. Then, lifting his left hand the fingers of which he spread wide apart, he checked off with the index finger of his right hand what was obviously a sort of finale to his prayers and a regular part of the evening ceremony. Beginning with the thumb he said, "Be"— the first finger, "a"— second, "manly"— third, "christian"— fourth, "gentleman."

At the last word the solemn little face became all alight with fun.

"Pig-a-back, Ruffles," he said. In a trice he had scrambled round behind and had his arms

about Ruth's neck who cantered off toward the stairs with him, followed by Dewey.

All this time Richard had been guilty of eavesdropping; and listening now, he heard merry sounds floating down from above stairs, for of a surety a frolic was on.

"The time is not yet," he thought as he slowly retraced his steps toward the hotel. Somehow he felt that he'd like to keep that picture in his mind of the intimate home life of this vivid, intense, spirited young girl.

How the responsibility of Danny's development and training revealed the potentialities of the future blossoming. But who would hasten the opening of the exquisite, infolding petals of a rose?

CHAPTER XIII

"IS the flag up yet, Danny?" called Ruth from the morning-room where she was arranging a bowl of nasturtiums.

"No, Ruffles, not yet, but the mens are cleaning the fish. I can see them. I guess it'll go up pretty quick," answered Danny.

Having adjusted the flowers to her satisfaction she placed them on a window sill against the background of a cream net drapery on which they almost appeared to be twining, and where the sun brought out wonderful colors in the green bowl.

Her little nod of approval as she stepped back to view the result implied that it was not half bad. Then she turned, picked up a good-sized basket and her riding gloves, and joined her father and Danny on the piazza.

"Well, Dad, what shall it be to-day; chowder, or squeteague alias tautaug, alias sea-trout? Down here 'that which we call a fish tastes as good under any other name.' Indeed we're lucky to get anything with fins under any name whatever as fish is about the only thing one can

be sure of on this cape. I don't wonder they called it Cod. If it wasn't for the captain we couldn't even have eggs and chicken."

Mr. Sanderson laughed. "It's lucky we came down with the idea of leading a simple life for it is certainly difficult to secure adequate provisions for the table. Now it is a surprise to me that someone doesn't go in for poultry raising and truck farming on a large scale. There isn't any reason in the world why it shouldn't pay well."

Danny was leaning his elbows on the piazza rail idly watching for James to bring round the pony-cart. But although his thoughts appeared to be far away he had heard all that was said.

"Ruffles, there's a cow out in the driveway," he mildly announced.

"Go poke her out into the lane, Danny," suggested his father.

But Danny did not move. He appeared to be considering the proposition. Then, very slowly, he queried in an argumentative tone, "Well, but Dad, s'pose the cow should pote me?"

"Never mind, Dannykins," laughed Ruth, "here comes James with the horses. He'll attend to her."

Danny walked quickly over to his father,

leaned against his chair, reached up and tucked his fingers inside Mr. Sanderson's collar.

"If you please, I think I may need a little money this morning," he said. "I haven't spended any money since we came to Harwich, you know."

"But there isn't much to buy down here, is there?"

"Well," said Danny, with his hands in his pockets, "p'raps I shan't buy anything, but I'll tell you when I get back, please."

So a dollar bill was transferred from Mr. Sanderson's pocket to Danny's and the pony-cart started off with a very definite air about it, as though it knew just where it was going.

Ruth was off for the fish houses. She was untrammeled by any petty rules of tradition, having been brought up to regard truth, sincerity, wisdom, and regard for the rights and welfare of others, with pity and helpfulness for the weak, the helpless, and dumb animals, as the fundamental principles of all right-living. So she had no hesitation from any false pride to accept the captain's playful suggestion in regard to a fish basket; and the cottagers along the way had come to watch for the girl with the basket on horseback. She had also won the

admiration — a very courteous admiration — from the fishermen themselves.

Mr. Sanderson had a business errand to attend to this morning, so the pony-cart was left to its own devices. Chrysanthemum's little hoofs clipped off the paces with much energy, but he couldn't cover ground in competition with either Bonny or Farmer Boy so he was soon left behind.

It was no surprise to James when Danny turned in at the Frost's driveway, as it was almost impossible to pass that enticing spot without stopping to — well, perhaps to feed the chickens, or possibly to be fed yourself with one of Eunice's cookies, and anyway to say hello. Besides, the captain was almost always somewhere in sight, and of course he'd 'spect you to stop just a minute. Yes sirree, just as I told you, for there he is this very minute out by the barn talking to "Mr. Dick" Huntington. Danny told Kissim to hurry, and waved his whip to "Uncle Captain."

How the old captain loved to have this dear mite of humanity coming in to see him every day!

"Hi, there, General, what's up to-day?" he hailed, as Chrysanthemum was brought to a stand.

Danny jumped to the ground, passed the reins to James and, removing his hat, followed his usual custom of shaking the captain's big, strong hand; and then he greeted Richard. He often found Richard talking to this special friend of his.

"Uncle Captain," began Danny, "could you — do you think you could spare a hen?"

"Why, I guess I might manage to get along if I let one go. Does Dewey want one for dinner?"

"No, I mean a live one."

"A live one! Where would you keep it?" There was an interested twinkle in the captain's eyes by now.

"I'm going to give it away," explained Danny.

"Oh, I see. Did you want me to ship it somewhere for you?"

"No, I thought I'd take it right now and carry it over to those ladies in the woods. You know, what had their house almost burned."

A week's acquaintance with Danny was more than enough to convince any reasonable-minded person that there was always a *raison d'être* for most all his actions and thoughts.

So now the captain and Richard exchanged interested glances tinged with curiosity.

"Oh, you mean Miss Susan Simpkins?"

"Yes, that's her. You see if she had a hen, the hen could born some little chickens and then more peoples could have eggs for breakfast and she could have the money."

"I see, but Danny, they —" just at this point Richard nudged the captain.

"Let's go take a look at the hens," he suggested, "and pick out a suitable one."

"All right, General, come along and take your pick."

Danny started on the run.

Richard saw possibilities of a bit of fun. "I say, Cap'n, if you happen to have a broody hen let Danny have her and I'll follow the matter up. It won't do any harm; that is, if you want to let the hen go."

The captain chuckled. "But where on earth you think Susan Simpkins can keep a hen gets me. However, Danny shall have the hen and then it's up to you."

So Danny was obliged to choose a certain big, fat, white hen which had stowed herself away on some hay in a corner of the barn. Eunice produced a basket with a cover in which the purchase was stowed, and Danny paid the captain thirty cents, the sum he was assured to be entirely sufficient for the valuation set on the

transaction. Not being versed in the market price of poultry, Danny had no hesitation and he carefully put back the change in his pocket.

Richard carried the basket to the pony-cart, gave James the wink, and directed him the nearest way to the house in question.

"I shall be calling there myself this morning," he said, "and as I can walk through a footpath which is a short cut I may arrive nearly as soon as you do."

"Aren't you going to see Auntie Frost and Mary, Danny?" asked the captain.

"Well, you see it's a very busy morning. P'raps I'll come in again by'm'by. Ged ap, Kissim!"

The captain chuckled at the air of weighty responsibility with which the small boy had picked up the reins and driven away, carrying with him a much disturbed hen and a greatly mystified James.

"Lord, I must go tell mother about Susan Simpkins bein' set up in the poultry business. Run along, Richard, sorry I can't come and see the fun. Drop in later and tell us about it."

Richard took the low fence at a running jump and was off across lots. "Just the same, he's a crackerjack little kid and I'm not sure he hasn't hit on a bright thought." And Richard

pondered on the doings of Danny as he hurried along. He proposed to let Danny open the play and occupy the stage alone at first. So when he drew near the tiny house, the present standing of which was due in good part to his own efforts, he looked about for a place where he could be concealed and yet be able to observe what was going on. He just made it in point of time for he already heard the little sputtering thud of Kissim's hoofs on the soft, sandy roadway. A little to one side of the blackened trail of the fire there was a small clump of scrub oak and bayberry bushes which would serve as a convenient screen and here he ensconced himself.

There were sounds proceeding from within the house, testifying to the presence of at least one of the sisters. Then as the pony-cart came in sight he heard calls of "Susan, Susan, come here quick." The tones of Sarah's voice weren't exactly what you'd call modulated.

"My, ain't they cute!" she squealed.

"Why, I believe the little boy is coming here — yes, he is; who do you s'pose he is? Ain't he pretty?"

Danny's step was slightly hesitant and his chin was not so high as customary. It wasn't as easy as he thought it was going to be to go up to two strange women and hand over his

present. He had a way of twisting one of his fingers in his curls when slightly embarrassed, and the forefinger of his right hand was very tightly twisted as he walked toward the house.

"Buck up, little General," whispered Richard, "the worst is yet to come."

Danny stepped up to the door and timidly rapped.

"Good morning," he said to Miss Susan who opened the door almost immediately.

"How de doo," was the response from Miss Susan, echoed by Miss Sarah whose face peered over her sister's shoulder at the sunny-haired visitor. "Won't you come in?" she asked.

"Well, you see, I bringed you a present, an' I guess I better go get it, it's out in the pony-cart." Danny turned to run but after a few steps he hesitated, wheeled about, waved a chubby hand and called, "I'll bring it right in."

The sisters looked at each other open-mouthed, too astonished for speech and waited for further developments.

They saw the boy try to lift a basket from the cart, but finding it too heavy he jumped in and drove up close to the door, where James, touching his cap, lifted the basket to the ground.

"Here 'tis," cried Danny. Not stopping to think, he lifted the cover and out flew a clucking,

cadarketing hen with such a fluster that the sisters screamed, Kissim shied, and Danny flew after the long-legged, seven-league-boot half stride and half flight of the hen. James grinned, and Richard concluded the psychological moment had arrived.

He was quite well known now to the Misses Simpkins for he often stopped in his walks through the woods for a chat with the ladies. Richard, you must remember, was constantly on the look out for raw material to be cooked up in tempting dishes, to be served on paper at some future time to a somewhat satiated public.

"Oh, Mr. Huntington," called Miss Sarah, waving her apron wildly and hastening to meet him. "Do you happen to know who that little boy is? He says he brought us a present — and it's a live hen!"

"So I perceive," he said. "Well, the first thing to do is to catch the hen. You go head her off up the left field while I stalk from the rear," laughed Richard, suiting the action to the word in so energetic a manner that Miss Simpkins caught the spirit and moved to place on the left field. Danny had just made a touchdown, but the hen slipped from underneath, made straight in Miss Susan's direction, giving that

estimable lady such a panic that she rushed for the little entry, seized an umbrella which she forthwith commenced to wildly open and shut to the extreme bewilderment of the much befuddled hen, who, with high and stately steps, retreated to center, poised on one foot holding the other high in protest and surveyed the enemy by which she was now surrounded, Richard up field, Danny left center, and Miss Susan and Miss Sarah at opposite corners, with James for umpire, holding onto his stomach with both hands and trying to straighten out the muscles of his face. "Oh Lord!" he groaned in a painful ecstasy of delight.

Richard made several wild gestures, and slowly and cautiously the outlying circle began to draw up toward the center of the field. And just at this point Ruth came strolling quietly down the same path over which Richard had recently trod. She paused by the identical clump of scrub oaks which had acted as a screen for him and her eyes ran quickly from one to another of the scattered group, but she did not at once see the hen.

"H'm, must be some new game — who's it? I wonder."

Miss Sarah still clutched her apron and Miss Susan the umbrella. Danny's hat hung on his

shoulders and his face wore the determination of an Indian chief on the war path, and Mr. Richard was plainly having the time of his life. He held a little back of the others for he anticipated a rush, which is just what happened. There were frantic grabs and shrieks, but a flopping, squawking mass of white floundered out of the scrimmage. Richard was ready for her. With a high jump he just managed to catch her by the leg to the huge delight of all but the hen, who shortly found herself tucked under Richard's arm with her wings held close.

"Land sakes, what a time!" panted Miss Sarah.

"Why, there comes Ruffles," shouted Danny.

He started joyously to meet his sister, but turned to call back, "Don't let her get away again, Mr. Dick." Which bit of advice or warning, it is to be inferred, had reference to the hen.

"Not on your life, Danny," chuckled Richard under his breath, with a special inference all his own.

"Now, Miss Sarah," began Richard in a confidential aside, "please introduce me to the young lady for I have never met her formally."

"Land sakes, you don't have to wait for introductions down here. But jest as you say,"

she whispered, as they drew near the young woman in question.

Folding her hands very properly and with a polite pucker Miss Sarah said, "Miss Sanderson, be you acquainted with Mr. Huntington?" It was a very saucy face, brimming with mischievous memories of their previous encounters that looked up to Richard.

"Not from an eastern point of view," she said, with a little gesture of acknowledgment. Then the sight of the blinking hen was too much for her and she burst into an irresistible peal of merriment.

"What is the name of the game?" she chuckled. "I just got in at the finish."

Richard smiled complacently, first at the hen and then at Ruth. At last he was in a position to enroll himself as her friend and she should have all the fun she wanted so long as he might share it.

"This," said he, "is business pure and simple. A new firm is about to be incorporated. Your brother provides the capital; the initial stock palpitates 'neath my left arm; and the firm name is to be 'The Simpkins Sisters,' concluding his short speech with a comprehensive sweep of his right arm and a sly wink at the two older ladies. "Now we should be very glad to enter your

name on the books as a regular customer for eggs and broilers."

Danny had been standing with his eyes glued to that hen, ready to grab should she make a second attempt to escape. Now he looked up at Ruth with a smile. "You see, Ruffles, I buyed the hen of Uncle Captain and gave it to the ladies."

"Oh, I see, or at least I begin to see."

So this little boy must be a brother to the pretty Miss Sanderson who had been so energetic at the time of the fire, thought the sisters.

"Land sakes, Mr. Huntington, what ever are we goin' to do with that hen?" came in chorus from both at once.

"Why," said Richard, "that's simple; just for the present we'll have to return her to the basket, and then," turning to Ruth, "if Miss Sanderson will accompany me through the woods to the village we'll procure suitable material, have it sent up, and in a short time Chicken Little will have a domicile worthy of a pioneer in a new enterprise. I'm quite a carpenter as you shall see. Then we'll get a setting of eggs and the business is launched. Captain Frost will give you all the desirable information as to care and feeding — *et vous voila.*"

Judged by the number of times that Susan

and Sarah traveled out to the temporary hen coop that night to feed, or to watch their new pet, Danny's inspiration was surely a success, in more ways than one. A new interest was awakened in the somewhat dreary existence of the two, and the incentive to succeed, from another point of view, grew each day.

When the soft, bright-eyed, downy little chicks hatched out there was excitement indeed and every one within hailing distance must needs come and see their treasures. Danny, Ruffles, Richard and Uncle Captain having launched the affair did not allow their good work to languish for the lack of grain, feed, additional pullets and finally a proud, disdainful and lordly young rooster which arrived with the compliments of Danny. Richard put in considerable time to enlarging the quarters.

Before the summer was over they all felt well repaid for the sisters really showed signs of growing younger. They were obliged to be much of the time in the open air, where previously they had remained indoors, generally with windows closed or blinds drawn.

CHAPTER XIV

"HERE they come. Oh, Nora, do look at Captain Frost's face! Wouldn't you think he was going to have all his teeth out?" laughed Mrs. Perry. She was tying her hat down firmly with a fetching automobile veil. This was to be the captain's initial motor trip. He had held off a long time but at last allowed himself to be overpersuaded by the combined entreaties of Mary and the Sandersons. After greetings had been exchanged Marion Perry shook her finger at the captain playfully.

"Now, if I am to sit with you, Captain, you've got to change your face a little bit," she sparkled. "Do you feel as bad as you look, poor dear?"

"Well, if you really want to know, why I feel some as I used to when I see a thick bank of fog closing in. That was the only thing as ever I was afraid of. And then I tell you you're sort of helpless, not knowin' what you may run up against any minute. There'd be about as much sense in putting a steam yacht

at a fourteen-knot clip through Marblehead Harbor when the New York Yacht Club is anchored there as the pace these showoffers take right through the middle o' town."

James' gravity broke at this and he joined in the general laugh.

Mr. Sanderson was carefully tucking a dust robe over the soft clinging draperies of Mary's summer gown. She sat in the seat beside James. Mr. Sanderson and Jack were to occupy the side seats.

"Are you perfectly comfortable?" he asked.

Mary gave a laughing glance into his kindly eyes. "It seems to me I am never anything else when you are round."

He made no rejoinder, but she met such a look of personal concern for her welfare in the steady depths of his brown eyes that her own eyes fell in some confusion, and her heartbeats became a bit unruly.

Danny, Elise and Nancy, who were to be left in Dewey's care, were gathered about to see the start. Marion Perry kissed them all and urged them to be good children.

"What shall I bring you from Hyannis? What would you like, Elise?" she asked turning to the sweet, serious face of her first born.

"Oh, Mother!" cried Elise with an ecstatic

little gesture, "Will you bring me a hat pin and a barrette? I've wanted one for years!"

Elise, looking eagerly into the little mother's face did not see the amused expressions of the onlookers. But mothers know their babies well and this little mother was wise enough to take her children seriously, although it was often very difficult to hide her own mirth at their funny ideas.

"Not a hat pin, dearie, but a barrette if you wish."

"Thank you, Mother," and the little child treble had only the faintest shade of disappointment in it at only half the request being granted.

"Now, Nance, what do you wish for?"

Nance was on the point of turning a somersault in the grass. She completed the circle, came to a sitting posture, and, with the light of a gypsy in her eyes, announced that a hurdy-gurdy would make her quite happy.

Danny thought he'd like a bean-blower.

"Come along, little mother, let's get this thing over," called Captain Frost. "You're so small Mr. Sanderson has put you between me and mother, so you won't bounce out."

Three pairs of dimpled hands waved from the gateway as the car rolled smoothly and almost noiselessly off on the hard, sandy road, for

James was a skilled mechanic and took great pride in keeping the running gear in perfect condition. They had not gone many miles before the captain allowed his muscles to relax, and before he knew it he was actually enjoying the easy, luxurious motion, and the familiar flying landscape.

Dewey started the kiddies happily playing house in the sand pile and then strolled across the street to chat with Eunice who was watering the plants. She could glance over and count heads every few minutes.

In their games of "house" Danny was the father, Elise the mother, and Nance the baby, always. Where on earth Nance had ever had sufficient opportunity to observe the ways of a small infant to an extent which would account for her wonderful acting of the part it would be hard to tell. Her saucy face, usually so instinct with feeling and emotion, became a blank, with the groping expression of a little newcomer all at sea as to the probable meaning of strange sights and sounds. Her little hands doubled up and fought the air. 'Twas a pity there was no one there to see.

"Now," said Elise, "it's Sunday and we must go to church."

"All right, I'll get the cart," and Danny ran

to fetch the little express wagon. He got a down pillow from the piazza and they put the baby in; or, to be perfectly literal, she tumbled in. Elise fetched some books and off they trundled across the meadow to a tree in a corner of the fence, which was always their church.

Standing under the old willow tree they opened their books.

"What shall we sing?" asked Elise, looking with thoughtful eyes at Danny.

"The Christmas song," said Danny: "'Little Lord Jesus lies asleep'—don't you know it?"

"No, we don't," Nance replied with a shake of her head. "But you tell us how," she suggested.

"All right," agreed Danny, laying his book on the ground.

"What you doin' that for?" demanded Nance. "We always have books in church."

"Why I *has* to go through the motions," announced Danny with emphasis.

Nance and Elise stood in front of Danny with wonder, interest and expectation in their earnest little faces while he sang the song as he had been taught it at Christmas time:

"Little Lord Jesus lies asleep,
Lullaby, lullaby,"

he sang; his pure, bird-like tones easily following the simple, sweet melody; his dimpled arms cradled and rocking to the rhythm of the music.

"Over His head the brightest stars peep,
Lullaby, Lullaby."

Here Danny raised his hands above his head and his fingers twinkled to represent the stars; then they dropped to the swinging motion again:

"Only a manger bed at best,
Near Him the lowing cattle rest,
Through him the world indeed is blest,
Lullaby, lullaby.

"Little Lord Jesus dreaming lies,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Angels singing in the skies,
Lullaby, lullaby."

Dropping on his little bare knees and clasping his innocent hands he concluded the Christmas carol:

"Shepherds are kneeling at his feet,
Happy the promised king to greet,
Joyful their praises to repeat,
Lullaby, lullaby!"

Nance, a born mimic, had followed Danny's gestures, crooning under her breath as she felt her way through the song, mostly on two or three notes nearly an octave below Danny. Elise's music-loving soul glowed in her shadowy eyes.

The only visible audience to this charming child tribute was a tiny father chickadee perched on the fence rail, turning his diminutive head from side to side and waiting for the children to move on, so it might be safe to dart into the very small hole in the fence post and drop a bit of worm into the waiting baby-bird mouth.

He had not very long to wait:— the song finished,— dispensing with any such unnecessary ceremony as an amen, the books were slammed shut and the family started for home.

Danny seemed to be turning over in his mind as to what was best to do next: "Don't you think the baby needs a shampoo?" he suggested.

"Why, yes, I guess she does," agreed Elise.

The baby pricked up her ears at the mention of a shampoo. A naughty sparkle flickered in her eye and when the question of water was raised she assumed an expression of astonishing intelligence. There was a pail of water at the back of her father's tent; this she knew having

been punished once for being caught sitting in it and watching the red from her little sweater gradually dye the water a brilliant scarlet. So like a flash her feet twinkled out to the pail and she returned with a basin, dripping water at every step.

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed Danny; "now I'll have to be the mans to do the shampoo. Oh, dear,"—his face fell at the thought of a new difficulty: "we'd ought to have something in a bottle to shake out!" His voice trailed off into an interrogation point.

It only took a minute for Elise to run to the kitchen and produce a bottle. (It happened to be a bottle of bluing.)

"All right! Now, baby, you lean your head over the basin and shut your eyes." Danny's chubby hands grasped the bottle and sprinkled the contents liberally over Nancy's hair, rubbing it well in with much energy.

"It's not just the right color," remarked Elise doubtfully: "It ought ter be kinder red 'stead of blue; but never mind."

Nance giggled and sputtered as the water ran down her neck. Her hair became more and more gloriously blue, and a creeping sense of something wrong assailed the more thoughtful Elise.

"I guess you better rinse it off now, Mr. Mans. I'll go get a towel!" But, unfortunately, rinsing didn't seem to help matters any.

"Oh, my! You're a sight!" cried Elise, her eyes wide with horror.

The wiping process was not very thoroughly done; little streams of blue trickled down Nancy's nose and fell to her dress when she stamped her foot in displeasure, not approving of the unseemly stares of her two playmates. Quick as a flash she started across the street for Dewey and Eunice. Danny and Elise followed slowly as far as the fence, climbed to the lower rail, and watched proceedings.

"Do you s'pose it'll ever come off?" queried Danny.

"What will mother say!" wondered Elise.

CHAPTER XV

"MY Goody Blakes! Nancy Perry! What ever have you done?"

It was Eunice who saw her first.

"I didn't do it. Danny did it!" grieved Nancy. Her finger went to her mouth and her eyes flashed defiance. She had come for sympathy, and met only the same amazed, horrified, uncomplimentary stares.

Dewey was the first to recover. "Oh, that boy!"— in a tone of exasperation and despair —"If he was mine I'd just give him a good lickin', that's what I'd do!" With rage in her heart she started toward the golden-haired sinner with the face of an angel.

But Nance had started down the street again, still in search of much needed sympathy, and now she felt sure she would find it, for leisurely strolling along the road, swinging their tennis racquets, with glowing cheeks, flying locks, and rather weary feet, came Ruth, Dorothea, Richard, Betty, and their friends, after a strenuous morning on the courts at the country club.

Nancy had spied them.

Dorothea was always ready with sympathy and comfort for her beloved niece; but Nance wasn't at all prepared for the shocking behavior of Dorothea's friends. Even Betty sat right down in a heap where she had stood by the side of the road; Nat Sterling scrambled up the nearest tree in pretended fright; as for Richard, he sprang to the top of a wall, wildly waving his hat and crying, "to humperty-hump with Yale!" and Ruth leaned against the wall and held her sides with laughing.

Dorothea picked up the weeping forget-me-not, patted and soothed and whispered loving words, till Nance could get her breath to tell the story.

Then Ruth became sober.

"I might have known the minute I saw her that Danny had a hand in it."

"However will we get it off?" groaned Betty.

"Wash it, of course," volunteered Richard. "What's the matter with going in bathing — all hands — and Nance can contribute a touch of glory to the occasion. We might as well get some fun out of the job."

"Come on, Nance, we'll soon fix you all right," propitiated Ronald, swinging her up to his broad shoulder.

"The rest of you can go, but it's up to me to punish Danny, since Dad's not at home," said Ruth with sober eyes.

"Oh, I say, the little chap didn't mean to do any harm; he didn't know it would be like that," interposed Richard with a grin. "Let him off this time."

But Ruth was firm. "He's got to be taught somehow to stop and think. I don't know just how, but we've got to make an attempt at it anyway. You all go on and take Elise with you. Danny and I'll have it out together."

Half an hour later Danny was seated in the middle of his little white bed, arrayed in his night clothes; his chubby, pink little feet drawn up under him sideways; his hands clasped and his golden curls bobbing emphatically while he argued with Ruffles who sat on the edge of the bed.

"I know,— but Ruffles, when you're playing house you has to do just what real peoples do. It's not naughty to have your hair shampooed."

"No, Danny, but little children can't do just what grown-ups do. You should remember you're only playing. You could have made believe shampoo, but not use real water; and just pretend you had a bottle of hair tonic. After this remember not to use real water."

"Not *ever*, Ruffles?"

"Not unless somebody older is with you and says you may."

"Oh, dear, seems to me everyfing you really wants to do is bad. I just wish good was naughty, and naughty was good."

"I've sometimes wished that myself, honey, but it isn't, so we have to make the best of it. I will get your little French book, Danny, and you can be saying over the names of the pictures to yourself. Here it is. I will leave the door open and sit on the piazza."

At five o'clock Dewey fixed a tempting, though simple supper on a tray to carry up to "poor li'l cap'n'." Passing through the dining-room with it she spied the bean-blower where Mr. Sanderson had laid it when he returned from motoring. She hesitated, then muttered to herself: "Poor baby, I guess he's punished enough. I don't see why he shouldn't have this." She had had time to get over her displeasure — love quickly followed anger where Danny was concerned. So she carried it up with her, hiding it until he had eaten heartily of the good food.

"Dewey, I wants you to stay here," urged Danny when he had finished.

"I can't, little Cap;" she replied, with a snuggle under his chin to make him laugh. "I've

got to get supper for your dad and Miss Ruth. But — which hand will you have? " she asked, placing both hands behind her back.

A slow smile dawned on Danny's subdued little face.

" What you got, Dewey? " he coaxed.

She held the bean-blower high above her head tantalizingly.

Danny sprang up with a shout, and a scrimmage was on. After the frolic, Dewey left Danny comparatively happy and went down to her duties. He was satisfied just at first to look at the bean-blower and handle it; and then suddenly it occurred to him that he wanted something to blow through it; — he certainly couldn't get any beans upstairs; but he was a boy of great resources. He gazed about the room for an inspiration, spied some folded tissue paper, pattered across the room, secured it, and clambered back to bed.

He tore off a small piece, made a little wad of it, moistened it in his mouth, then blew through the tin tube toward the ceiling. To his great surprise it stuck there; Danny chuckled. " That's a stunt," thought he; another little wad followed the first; this one fell to the floor and Danny looked disappointed, but not discouraged. The third and fourth stuck

close by the first and Danny settled down to business. Lying on his back he peppered the ceiling till he tired of the sport, grew drowsy, and, with a sigh of content, closed his big brown eyes and drifted into dreamland.

Coming in a half an hour later, for a good-night talk, and to hear Danny say his prayers, Ruth looked in amazement at the ceiling, wondering if wasps had started to build a nest. She tiptoed over to the bed and looked long at the sleeping boy — the picture of sweet innocence. Her heart glowed with love for the brother, and her artist soul was filled with satisfaction for the perfection of his physical beauty. "Is there anything in this world more beautiful than Danny, asleep?"

Had the query actually been voiced, and put to,— well, say Richard — he might have looked into the depths of the questioning eyes of Danny's sister, their fringes lifted from cheeks scarcely less glowing than Danny's own — he might have glanced from Danny's short, clinging, golden curls to the waves of dusky, glossy, shining tendrils that caressed Ruth's neck with every passing breeze — and refused to give an unqualified affirmative.

Ruth caught sight of the bean-blower which had slipped from Danny's relaxed hand,

then her glance took in the torn bits of paper. A puzzled frown ruffled her forehead, which slowly changed to dawning enlightenment. She drew a chair beneath the spotted portion of the ceiling and stood upon it to get a near view. Perfectly satisfied, she got carefully down, turned again toward the unconscious worker of mischief with a smile and little gesture of enforced surrender. "Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth," she whispered. Slipping quietly out of the room she ran down to the piazza to tell the pater, and Richard and Mary, who had run over with the news that Nancy's hair was still blue in spite of a thorough scrubbing, and also to put in a word of conciliation for the much-loved Danny.

CHAPTER XVI

"I SAY, Miss Ruth, it's positively painful, you know; this — eh — spasm of unseasonable energy. I shouldn't think you'd like to be the cause of upsetting a fellow's peace of mind in this fashion." Richard nibbled indolently at a blade of grass he had just reached out to pull.

Ruth gave him a merry glance of inspection over her shoulder; then turning again to her work, she replied:

"I see no outward expression of internal disturbance, mental or otherwise. It strikes me that an unbiased opinion from an impartial observer might be to the effect that the amount of peace radiating from you at the present moment would call to mind the Hague Conference."

"That only goes to show what wonderful control I have over my nervous system, and the marvelous ability I have acquired in concealing the war of emotions raging within."

Just here Ruth dropped one of her modelling tools and Richard was obliged to resign his position of repose, where he had sat comforta-

bly leaning back against the fence, with his hands clasped about his knees, to pick it up, for Ruth had in her lap a large wooden board which held her clay and a variety of tools.

"By Jove! You have just caught the spirit of the thing to a right smart degree and no mistake!" he exclaimed, kneeling on one knee to replace the dropped tool on the board, as he admired Ruth's work: a small bas-relief of Captain Frost's gateway, with its carved posts guarded by pink-blossoming altheas; the straight, flower-bordered walk and the beautiful doorway.

"The whole place looks just like Mrs. Frost, and Mary, doesn't it?" asked Ruth. "The captain's a dear, but somehow you don't feel that he's responsible for the physical aspect of the place. He's a grand man; but there's a stateliness, a dignity and refinement about his beautiful wife that one rarely sees. I do hope I shall become proficient enough to paint her in oils some day, not too far away. Of course Mrs. Frost accounts for the architecture of the house, for I imagine it's the only one of the kind on the whole cape. Miss Mary told me the other day all about the beginning of the captain's romantic courtship. What's that? — tell you so you can get points? — Pooh, there's

no such thing as romance now-a-days! Dad says there's something out of joint in this generation. I suppose he knows. I don't bother my head about it," she said with a tilt of her pointed chin. "Well, this is how the captain met his lady:" Ruth was busily working all the while she rattled on, and Richard now settled back again to his former position and lighted a cigarette.

"It seems that Mrs. Frost's father was a ship-chandler; fitted out vessels with supplies, you know, for their long trips. One day the captain was in the store making purchases and preparing for a trip to the East Indies; he stood chatting with Mr. Palfrey (that was Mrs. Frost's father) who stooped to pick up a kitten they kept about the place. As he stooped a little pocket photograph case fell from his vest pocket to the floor and Captain Frost hastened to pick it up for the older man. It had flown open and two photographs were exposed to view; one, a very beautiful young woman, the other, obviously her mother.

"'Pardon me, Mr. Palfrey,' said the captain, handing back the card case to its owner, 'but those are wonderfully beautiful faces you are carrying about with you, sir.'

"Mr. Palfrey opened the case and looked at

them with pardonable pride: 'Yes, sir!' said he, 'none lovelier,— my wife and daughter, Captain Frost; did you get a good look at them?' He passed it back for a closer inspection.

"The young man studied one of the faces for some moments. 'Is she really as handsome as that?' he asked, still holding the case in his hand as though loath to part with it.

"'*They* are,' replied Mr. Palfrey, with a twinkle in his eyes as he took back the precious case and returned it to his vest pocket.

"Shortly after the sailing of the *Ariel* Mr. Palfrey received a letter from Captain Frost, mailed at New York, in which he confessed that the pictured face of the photograph case was ever before his mind; and asked if, knowing as Mr. Palfrey did, all about his character, his ancestry and his prospects, he would be willing that the captain should call on his daughter as soon as he returned, with a view to winning her love if possible. He begged for a reply to be mailed to — some port, I forget where.

"Mr. Palfrey stated in his reply that he certainly had no objection to the captain's calling upon his daughter; that he, personally, thought very highly of his friend, Captain Frost, and if he succeeded in his suit,— precious as his

beloved daughter was,— he felt she would be in worthy hands. He advised the captain not to be over-confident, as there were several already doing their best to win her heart, and he was bound to say in all fairness, however, that so far she had smiles for all alike, with no hint of special favor for any.

"Mr. Palfrey had, of course, showed the captain's letter to his daughter and acquainted her with his own reply.

"Being a man, Mr. Huntington, I suppose it would be quite impossible for you to imagine how her heart must have stood still for a second, when, one day,— months later — Mr. Palfrey came home and said: 'Mollie, the *Ariel* cast anchor in the harbor this morning.'"

"Well, no, perhaps I can't; but being a man, I can jolly well realize what courage it took to walk up and ring the Palfrey's doorbell that evening."

"It must have been a brass knocker, goosie, not a bell."

"So much the worse in its effect at such a psychological moment. The captain must have been something of a good-looker himself. I should like to have seen them as bride and groom. I suppose he scoured the Indies for fitting gifts to bring home to his lady-to-be."

"That's what! — Mary showed me some of the things. . . . There, I'm through for to-day; one more morning will finish this."

Richard sprang to his feet to relieve her of the board which he promised to carry most carefully, and Ruth picked up the little camp stool.

"Why don't girls wear that sort of thing oftener?" asked Richard, looking with appreciation at the pretty work-apron which protected Ruth's dainty white gown. "It's mighty fetching, you know."

"Thanks; but when, other than a similar occasion to the present one, would you have them wear it, pray?"

"Oh, well, I suppose it's because it has a domestic air that a fellow likes the looks of it."

"Come along," urged Ruth, "the captain always wants to see the progress on his clay doorway; we must go up and show it to him. Ship ahoy!" she cried, as they came in sight of the captain tipped back in his favorite chair.

"Aye, aye, mate,— blows she fair to-day?" sung out the captain, the front legs of his chair coming down with a thud. "Let's get a look at her." He rose, slipped his glasses down from their perch on the top of his head to his nose and peered through them with his sharp blue eyes.

"Now I want to know, Richard, if that isn't pretty slick, hey?" He turned his beaming face first on Richard and then toward Ruth, pride and pleasure writ large all over it. "Mother will want to see it. Just lay it down on the table there while I go fetch her. Sit down, children, I'll be right back," he said, as he entered the house.

He returned shortly with his rosy-cheeked, white-haired lady whom Ruth rose to meet, softly kissing the blooming cheeks. "Oh, if I could only paint you!" she sighed, with a little despair in her young voice.

"Why, dearie, so you will one of these days. Your father tells me he's going to leave you in Boston for a course at the Art School, and first thing we know you'll be famous. I may live to see my portrait hung on the line in the Salon, who knows?— Now let's see the doorway.— It's just fine, Ruthie, and we're as proud as can be, aren't we, William?"

"'Deed we are, Mother, but look who's coming —"

From round the far corner of the house, in the direction of the kitchen, Danny was sauntering along; Peter Pan, as usual, rubbing about his legs and coaxing for a frolic. To-day he seemed especially assertive, frequently rising on

his hind legs and pushing his head under Danny's arm.

"Danny must have been visiting Eunice," said Ruth. "How came he over here?"

"Why, your father came over with him, Ruthie. The apparatus has arrived which he sent to Boston for in order to teach Mary to swim properly. My! how he did tease the captain for having a daughter who couldn't swim;" the dear lady laughed softly in reminiscence of the jollying the captain received. Only "jollying" isn't a word she herself would have used.

"They're down on the float now, having the first lesson. Mary didn't want an audience so they have gone in a little ahead of time, and they left Danny here. Talk about wanting to paint, Ruthie, I should think Danny would be a constant inspiration, for every time I look at him it seems to me he's a picture; — every posture, every expression, seems lovelier than the last."

Danny was drawing nearer. He wore a freshly laundered white piqué Russian suit, with red sailor collar and belt; the straw sailor hat, bound with red ribbon, had fallen back on his shoulders, where it usually was as a matter of fact, uncovering his glistening head. He made

sturdy attempts to keep Peter in his proper place on the ground, for Peter's persistence seemed to be slightly annoying.

"Peter Pan, I'll swat you if you don't behave!" he threatened, in a tone intended to intimidate, but which failed to repulse Peter.

"Hi, Danny!" called Ruth.

Danny stood still and looked at Ruth with a slightly hesitating, questioning little cock to his head.

"Well, kiddo, why don't you come along up?" inquired his sister.

"I'm comin'," he drawled, and continued on his way; but still with a little lack of his usual ease of manner.

"Peter seems to love you an awful lot to-day, Dannykins," said Ruth.

Danny looked at Peter with a frown of displeasure. "'Taint me;" he replied dubiously. "He wants my cigar."

"Wants what?" exclaimed Ruth.

Danny turned red and his chubby hand went up in an attempt to cover some object protruding from his blouse pocket. There was a slight pause, and glances exchanged between all the others.

"Danny, dear, come to Auntie Frost and tell her where you got a cigar." With a gesture in-

viting confidence Mrs. Frost held her hands out to Danny, who went to her knees, still jealously guarding the object of interest.

"I — I — took it out the 'frigerator," said Danny; "please, can't I keep it?"

Mrs. Frost looked puzzled. "Let's see it, dearie," she suggested.

Danny drew from his blouse pocket a long, slim, brown, cold fried sausage and placed it in Mrs. Frost's hand.

"It's my cigar," he reaffirmed in a beseeching tone.

Ruth stuffed a handkerchief in her mouth and fled precipitately through the nearest door; Richard dodged round the corner; the captain shook with silent laughter; and Mrs. Frost, in her wisdom, was left to deal with a situation which seemed to call for considerable argument and suggestion.

CHAPTER XVII

JOCK TUTTLE was off for Monomoy in the *Petrel*, with only one passenger: Eunice Pease had a day off and Jock had agreed to sail her over to the sandy point of land where a friend of hers lived at the Life Saving Station.

It was a good nine miles' sail. They were obliged to beat down, taking several tacks; but coming back they would have a fair wind. The weather was all that could be desired; Eunice was something of a sailor and could take a hand at the tiller in case of need; also, when asked to cast off the main sheet, she could be relied upon not to make a mistake and loose the painter.

They were on a long tack and Eunice, seated with her back fitted into the hollowing sail, pulled her sunbonnet well down over her eyes. Jock was happily puffing at an old cob pipe. They had been silent for some time; only the rush of the churning water along the *Petrel's* sides breaking the stillness as she cut her way through the short waves of the bay.

"Gosh!" Jock broke out suddenly, "I just

hate ter see this summer slippin' away. Seems ter me I ain't never got quite so interested in any of our summer folks before. Don't like to think how lonesome it'll seem when Miss Ruth ain't here to jolly me, and Master Danny with his surprisin' little ways." He gave a long, deep pull at his pipe, thoughtfully puffing out the smoke.

Eunice looked back at the receding houses along the beach and the river they had just left; answering Jock's mood.

"Yep! and we ain't the only ones what's goin' to feel lonesome nuther. In some ways it's a kind of disturbin' summer, too, happy as it's ben.— I'm sort o' anxious about dear Mistress Mary."

"Eh? — Ain't nuthin' the matter with Miss Mary, is ther'?" asked Jock with concern.

"Oh, no; only — well — nuthin', I guess."

"Huh! Ef that ain't jest like a woman for all the world;" sneered Jock. "Now, what you hintin' at?"

Eunice looked at Jock with an expression of compassion for his man-like short-sightedness.

"Nothin'd ever penetrate that thick skull o' yours till 'twas an accomplished fact," laughed Eunice. "Foreseein' ain't exactly in your line, is it?"

"No, 'tain't, an' I'm glad it's so. Foreseein' ain't allers foreknowin'. Long's Miss Mary's well, and I judge from the way she's progressin' with them swimmin' lessons, that her health's purty good, don't see's you've got much cause to worry."

"Ain't that tackle with the belt and pole an' rope that Mr. Sanderson hitches onto her when she's learnin' them frog-actions just clever though?" remarked Eunice; "he a-holdin' her easy-like from the float, and sayin', 'two, three, kick, bend,' and Miss Mary doin' jest as she's told, with never a fear o' drownin'! And they say up Boston way there's buildin's with large pools of water inside, all fitted up with marble floors and brass railin's, where they teach folks to swim in the middle o' winter. Great doin's I call it! Miss Mary says 'tain't real easy to learn to swim when you're goin' on thirty year old. She was tellin' me 'bout the first time he let her swim with a slack rope and said 'twas all she could do to keep from bein' scared. She didn't darse to think of the water under her and just kep' her eyes on Mr. Sanderson's face every minute. She knew, of course, that he wouldn't let her drown, but it's a helpless feelin' that you can't touch nothin' solid, I bet." Eu-

nice glanced over the side at the depth of rushing water, with an expression of awe.

"Miss Ruth's the girl that can show 'em how," said Jock with as much pride as though he had a half ownership in Danny's Ruffles. "She's some swimmer, she is. She and Mr. Richard make a team all right. They go off on a long course, side by side, and leave the others foolin' round, turnin' somersaults and cuttin' up high jinks generally. Say, was you ever down on the beach when Miss Ruth and Danny come down in their bathin' suits ready for a bath?"

"No, don' know's I ever was. Why?"

"Well, yesterday, I had beached the dory and was settin' along her rail, waitin' for a party to come down to go out fishin'; there was a whole crowd o' folks sprinkled all over the beach — all kinds o' shapes settin' round and sprawlin' round in bathin' suits, and others in their fancy duds, with gay parasols; men in white flannels, and others lyin' in the sand gettin' a good co't o' tan on to make a show when they go back to town,"— here Jock removed his pipe to give a half chuckle,—"and groups of women here and there with their crocheting. And then I see Miss Ruth and Master Danny comin' down from the bath house. Well, 'twas a pretty

sight all right. I ain't much at describin', but she's so slim and straight and round and stocky; and her face just like a flower in a pretty cap with little rosette things on the side; and Master Danny's sturdy little figger makin' you think o' cherubs. Don't he look as though he'd just stepped straight out o' Heaven! Well, you'd o't to have seen the whispers goin' round, and the nudgin', an' everyone turnin' to look at them two! Miss Ruth, just as unconcerned as Master Danny, noddin' here and there to friends, stoppin' on her way to say a word or two, and then goin' straight away on down to make Danny do stunts in the water. An' he does 'em, too, ain't no more afraid than nothin'. She says the first time she took him in, a wave struck him and knocked him over. She s'pected he'd be scared blue and when she picked him up, soon's he could get his breath, he laughed up at her and said, 'It's rainin', Ruffles.'

"Then soon's he's had enough, that tall black girl takes him up and rubs him down, while Miss Ruth has her swim. It's kind o' funny they're all so different from other folks, even to the black girl; there's an awful lot o' style to her, and as for Mr. Sanderson — well, I ain't never seen a prince, but I should think a real prince might look and walk some like him."

"They are a mighty sightly lot," put in Eunice, "but the best part of 'em, to my notion, is that they don't put on no airs; they're all just as sweet and polite to everyone they know, and Miss Ruth is just as partikerler to pay 'tention to me as she is to Mis' Frost."

"That's so! That's jest it! And there's a lot in that, too. It's the real princely people I find what's really the simplest, and seems to think the least 'bout their fine clothes and things. You take some o' them fellers in their white flannels, I bet they don't feel to home in 'em a bit — kinder, sorter as though they was out makin' their first party call, likes not; not feelin' quite sure whether they're doin' the correct thing, eh?"

"Er, huh. I know the kind — lots of 'em, too. Then there's some folks that, no matter what they have on, look noble and you're sure they'd be at home anywhere, an' in the finest clothes ef they had 'em to wear."

"Danny was tellin' me this mornin' that he had a '*secrest*,' he couldn't tell me now what 'tis, but jest soon's he could he would, but it's somethin' 'bout dancin', he said. Know anythin' 'bout what he meant?" queried Jock.

"The young folks hev got suthin' up their sleeve that they're awful busy about, some kind

of a show I guess. I heard Miss Betty tellin' the folks one day on the piazza, how when she was in England last year, she went to a — well, I guess 'twas some sort of a birthday celebration given in honor o' Shakespeare, or like that; they had some old-fashioned dances called Morris dances, and she learned some of 'em while she was over there. She told how there was some few old men left who had learned 'em when they was children from their fathers and so they could tell the folks jest how they used to be danced years and years ago. And I s'pect that Miss Betty's teachin' some of 'em to a lot of the young folks here; but jest what it's all for, I don't know. They're awful busy about it — go up to the hotel casino every day to practice."

"That so!" mused Jock; "I wonder now what sort of a show they're aimin' at."

Thus the two old friends gossiped all the way to Monomoy.

Jock put in his time on the point digging clams until Eunice called him in to dinner. The dining-room, with its long table where the men on duty at the station in the winter season gather at meal times was as neat and ship shape as the deck of a government boat. During the month of July most of the men were off duty

and it happened to-day that Mrs. Burgess was all alone. Living in such a lonely spot, where most of the happenings, out of the ordinary course of events — except for an occasional picnic party in summer — are in the nature of tragedies, she was greatly rejoiced to see her visitors and get all the news from up Harwich way.

Eunice regaled her with accounts of Danny and Nance and Elise. "Land, it keeps you busy guessin' what those young ones'll say next;" she laughed, passing the delicately browned berry-cake to the hostess. "Mrs. Perry was tellin' me how she's allers been in the habit of spellin' words that she doesn't want the children to understand, when she's talkin' to Mr. Perry. The other day Nance had a cold so Mrs. Perry took Elise aside and told her she could go in bathin', but she didn't want Nance to know when they went for fear she'd be disappointed. So Elise kep' still about it, but when it come along time — she thought — to be goin', Elise looks from Nance to her mother in a knowin' way and says: 'Mother, how 'bout those c-o-d's?' Mrs. Perry said she couldn't think whatever the child was drivin' at. 'What did you say, dear?' she asked. 'How about those c-o-d's?' she says again, sort of impatient.

'C. o. d's?' says her mother, 'what on earth do you mean, child?'—'Mother! she says in a most disgusted tone. 'You know — those c-o-d bathing suits!'"

After the laugh had subsided Mrs. Burgess inquired for her old friend Mr. Huntington: "He ain't been down for most a fortnight. He says he feels obliged to come over once a week to jolly me up. Ain't he the clever young fellow though! I was tellin' him the last time he come, that first along I was most afraid to talk to such a literary chap. 'Oh, wait till you see our artist,' he says, 'then you *will* be scared!'

"'Artist?' ses I."

"'Yes, some artist,' ses he; 'oh, you've got a talented set here this year. This artist,' ses he, 'she's gettin' educated to 'lustrate my books.'"

"'That so!" ses I; 'does she know it?'"

"Then he looked at me kind o' queer, and handsome as a picter, but unusual serious for him."

"'No'; he says, 'she don't have any idea of it. Fate don't believe in tellin' folks what's goin' to happen to 'em in the years to come; 'twouldn't be playin' the game.'"

"'No?' ses I, "'but Fate seems to have confided in some other folks though.' 'Oh, that's

all right,' ses he with a twinkle in his eye. 'Two or three years from now I'll come down here and prove it!' He looked so strong and determined and cock-sure that I ses to myself, guess you mean to lend a helpin' hand to Fate in case she needs it.

"Then I ses: 'Be you comin' down at that time hitched single or double?' 'Double so fer's the harness is concerned, but single in mind and purpose,' ses he, and with that he walks off whistlin' merry as can be, his hands clear down in his pockets and I guess he walked clean round the point."

"H'm,"— Jock drained the last drop of fragrant coffee from his cup;—"I wouldn't feel that Fate was makin' any mistake in hitchin' them two to pull together; but Miss Ruth ain't suspectin' anythin' of the kind either of Fate, or of Mr. Richard. She's jest so much alive and busy livin' in the present minute that she ain't frettin' herself about the future; not so's you'd notice it, she ain't."

Jock rose and strolled out to the barn for his after-dinner pipe while Eunice helped wash up the dishes and then 'twas time to set sail for the long run home before a free wind.

CHAPTER XVIII

MASTER DANIEL ROSS SANDERSON, descendant of a Revolutionary ancestor, struggled manfully with an almost overpowering desire to confide in his good friends, Jock and Eunice, the exciting purport of his "*secrest*," but with Ruth's constant reminders and his father's repeated statement that if the people knew about it beforehand all the best part of the fun would be spoiled, he had managed to bottle up the effervescing knowledge of what was to come. But in due time he had the satisfaction of being the bearer of the invitations for the all-important event; Ruffles tied blue ribbons to Chrysanthemum's bridle and Danny rode off, a basket on his arm, accompanied by James, and left at each house the dainty card which Ruffles had given much time and thought to decorating.

Danny was wild with excitement, for I want you to understand that this was to be his party. And he made such a dash for the captain's, which was the first house where an invitation

was to be delivered, that he almost upset his "apple cart."

Mary and Auntie Frost, seeing the gala appearance of Danny and Kissim, went to the steps to greet him:

"How gay you are, Daniel Ross Sanderson," said Mary, "and Kissim looks very handsome in blue. He's had an extra polish to his coat this morning," she continued, softly stroking the pony's neck. "Why, what's this? An envelope for me — is it a letter?"

"Open it!" cried Danny with dancing lights in his brown eyes.

So Mary leaned against Kissim's shoulder and read: "Auntie Frost and Uncle Captain and Mistress Mary are invited to attend a pine needle party at Seldum Inn on Wednesday, the twenty-seventh day of August, 1910, from four to eight-thirty o'clock." Then on a separate small card in a queer, bold, irregular printing was Danny's own name.

"Just listen to that, Mother, we're invited to a party."

Mary was one of those fortunate people who do not forget what it is to be young, and how very, very important such an event is, so her face reflected such a sympathetic joy of anticipation that Danny couldn't resist throwing

his arms round her neck. He squeezed her tight and kissed her.

"Well, Danny, we'll all come early and stay till the very last minute," declared Mrs. Frost.

Then Danny looked wistfully at Peter Pan who sat bolt upright on the piazza post, his front paws close together with his tail curled around them, his chin well back on the snow white of his shirt front, and an expression of conscious satisfaction with his own general appearance.

"I wish Peter could come, too," he yearned.

"Master Danny, if you stay here too long we shan't get around," suggested James.

"All right, James, but I got to give one to Eunice."

Danny rode Kissim up to the open kitchen window, put his head in and called loudly.

"Wait while I wipe my hands, there's a dear. What is it anyway?" came the response.

"An inbetation to my party."

"*Me* invited to a party!" said Eunice, amazed.

"'Course," said Danny. "And Jock's comin', too."

"Well, well; sure I'll come. Guess likely you'll want some help in the kitchen."

"No, you're to be in the party. You wait and see — and there's goin' to be muselik!"

"My land!" Eunice's hands went up in pretended astonishment.

But again James broke in and Danny turned away toward the Perry's. He found it hard work not to linger with each one, but James laid down the law and hurried Danny from house to house. It was near the end of the summer and Danny had made friends with all the village people. There was the doctor, the postmaster, the cobbler, and the store-keeper; besides the Simpkinses, Jock Tuttle, of course the Sterlings, and many others.

And now, at last, the great day itself dawned clear and bright. How many pairs of bright eyes opened wide on awakening to glance eagerly out at the weather signs! Betty Marsh was especially anxious for she had spent so many hours in training the dancers and had done all in her power to make Mr. Sanderson's generous treat a success.

Professional decorators from Boston, under the direction and supervision of Ruth and Richard, had transformed the picturesque point of land into a veritable fairyland.

By half after four o'clock the guests had all been received and were now gathered together, seated in a semi-circle facing an open space in the grove where a low platform had been con-

structed and then strewn with pine needles to conceal its artificiality from view. An orchestra was gayly playing rag-time which set all the feet tapping, thereby causing a cessation of industry among the ants and tiny spiders who scuttled away in alarm. There was a general air of expectancy and curiosity as to just what form the entertainment would take. But at last a signal was given, the orchestra stopped and a piano, cleverly hidden behind some thick spruce trees, struck up the alluring, gay air of merrie old England always played for the "Morris On." There was a stir among the guests and a stretching of necks to get a good view as a line of gay dancers was seen to be coming down the path, with a one, two, three, hop; — every foot touching the ground in unison, each hand waving a handkerchief with abandon, and faces beaming. Who should be leading the dance but Danny himself with Nancy for a partner, the tiniest ones of all. A loud murmur of ohs and ahs, and did-you-evers, and well-I-nevers rose among the audience. Just behind Danny and Nance came Elise and Howard Sterling, each couple following being a trifle taller than the one immediately preceding; twenty-four couples in all; there were bells on the slippers of the tiny girls and the maids, and on the knees of

the boys and men; quaint, old-fashioned costumes, short-waisted dresses with white kerchiefs and becoming sunbonnets tied under the chin worn by the maids; knickerbockers, frilled shirts and queer old hats with bands of bright ribbon topped the gay attire of the men and boys.

The tinkle of the bells on knees and feet told of the careful training Betty had given to keep the time perfect. On they came, waving and smiling at the audience; down the right front of the enclosed space, circling the front; then back, and separating, some grouping themselves to the right of the space, dropping onto rustic seats or on the ground in front; others at the left forming a picture on and around a hay stack, both groups making charming tableaux.

In the meantime three couples had formed in the center for "Shepherds Hey." With scarcely a pause in the music the dance was in full swing: down and back, turn; up and back, face; clapping; go and come; and so on to the double-quick time at the close with all hands up and a yell.

The applause was enthusiastic enough to satisfy one and all, but no repetitions could be given as the dances had been planned to fill in just the right amount of time. "Shepherds Hey" was followed by "Rigs O'Marlow";

then six boys gave "Bean Setting"— a quaint old dance typifying the planting of beans. Ruffles and Richard made a special hit in their leading of "Laudanum Bunches," one of the most vigorous of all the dances with its difficult capers.

But there was a breathless excitement when Danny and Nancy led four other children through the charming, graceful steps of "Princes Royal." Nance was as light as a bit of thistledown on her feet, and Danny's curls bobbed in time to the tinkle of the bells. Perhaps the most entrancing of all was Danny's bow in response to Nance's quaint curtsy: bending low, a slight step to the right, drawing back the pointed left foot, and a swing of his right hand to his heart with all the earnestness of a cavalier of old.

Jock's large, work-hardened hands woke the echoes; and a tear stole slowly down Mrs. Frost's soft cheek — a tear of appreciation for the wonderful beauty of childhood and its grace and pure joy.

The dancing ended with the whole long line of couples skipping through the kaleidoscopic "Ribbon Dance" to the tune of "Pop Goes the Weasel."

When the last couple had skipped down the

line, under the arch to the bottom, the piano slid into the halting rhythm of "Morris Off," where the somewhat weary dancers take a walking step on the toes, dropping to heel at every fourth note, languidly waving their handkerchiefs in farewell to the guests, they marched around and off down the path whence they came.

Just as soon as they were out of sight the ranks broke and the girls and boys rushed back to mingle with the other guests and help to steer them toward the large tent in the rear of the grove where salads, sandwiches, ices and delicacies of all kinds were served at small tables for those who wished to be seated, many of the young people preferring to scatter in groups, the boys gallantly hastening to and fro with plates generously loaded.

Mr. Sanderson conducted the captain's lady — stately in her heavy black brocaded satin, with its sweeping train and exquisite Duchesse lace collar — to a seat of honor; the captain offered his arm with a low bow to Ruth, and Richard gayly piloted Mary.

It was a merry party. Danny was busy tripping about, the bells on his knees tracing his progress hither and thither from one guest to another; but finally he settled down beside Mis-

tress Mary and became very intent on the best method of eating a tempting ice in the shape of a pear. He tried taking it in his fingers, as he would the real fruit and found that altogether too frigid; then he attempted to lift it by the stem, which forthwith pulled out much to his disgust. "How *do* you eat the old thing, anyway?" he asked.

Mary placed a spoon in Danny's chubby fingers and laughingly lifted a bite to his rosy mouth. Danny snuggled closer yet to Mary and she fed him, calling him her little robin.

"I wish," he said, softly patting her cheek, "you'd come to Crawlerrado when we go home and sleep in Ruffle's bed — she's not going to be there when we go back." It was a very, very wistful little tone of voice in which Danny said it.

Mr. Sanderson, sitting on the other side of Mary, smiled quietly to himself and took a sly glance at the red creeping up Mary's neck just back of the ear that was all he could see at that moment.

Captain Frost turned to his host and said, "Mr. Sanderson, our people will never forget this night. It will be talked of for years to come. Look at our good doctor and his frau!

There isn't a face here that isn't beaming with happiness."

It was a democratic gathering; none of the natives had been forgotten; they and the cottagers mingled and laughed with a friendly spirit of *camaraderie*. Jock and Eunice had lingered on the outskirts, withdrawing timidly, but they were soon drawn into the midst, for their friends were many. It was the spirit of the summer time and camp life, when petty distinctions are forgotten.

Dewey was in her element — anything in the nature of an entertainment was dear to her heart. Arrayed simply in a becoming black dress with immaculate white collar, cuffs and apron, she was busy seeing that all were served as they should be. Catching sight of her as she came out from the house, Nat Sterling called to her from where he sat atop of a rustic fence near a group of young people. "Joy, but you *do* look swagger! You're as tall and slim and graceful as the light gazelle!"

Dewey cast him a sidelong glance from her snapping black eyes, stopped, considered, and replied: "Well, that's a pretty roundabout way of calling a body a deer, but just to make the title good I bet you I can clear that fence you're on at a running jump."

"Oh, come now; 'twould be a pity to break your slender neck in that fashion. Danny still needs his Dewey, remember."

Dewey stepped back, laid the tray she was carrying on the ground, measured the distance with her eye, ran five or six steps and cleared the top rail at a leap, clean and slick.

Amidst a round of applause she coyly fled, forgetting her tray.

Twilight deepened quickly to dusk and slowly the moon rose, a large yellow ball off across the water. The guests scattered at will. There was nobody present who was not having a good time, for the young people had given Mr. Sanderson their word that they would take special pains to see that everyone was looked out for and well entertained.

It had been a very exciting day and very much out of the ordinary run of the well-regulated life of the extremely young host. In spite of his valiant efforts to keep his eyes wide open the lids were fast becoming unmanageably heavy with sleep. He was strolling about the outskirts of the crowd with one hand in Mary's and the other in his father's when Dewey came to find him. Danny lifted his arms and said with a restful little sigh, "Take me, Dewey."

"Yes, little Cap, I thought you'd be about

ready to come to Dewey." Very sleepily the little fellow offered his rosy mouth for a good-night kiss first to Mary and then to his father, then his head drooped to Dewey's shoulder and his eyes closed.

Thus she bore him away to dreamland, with a finger on her lips to warn the guests not to waken him as she threaded her way toward the house; so only whispered good nights and loving glances followed his departure.

Mary and Mr. Sanderson watched him out of sight. The wonderful strains of Rubinstein's "Music of the Spheres" stole to them through the trees with soul-stirring effect and without a word they stood till the last strain had quivered to silence. Then Mary turned to her companion:

"I feel as though I had been lifted up off the earth for just a little. I wish we didn't have to come down so soon."

Mr. Sanderson smiled into the depths of her eyes still glowing with the emotional satisfaction of a music lover.

"I think I can take you to a spot where sight shall give you a delight equal to that just now produced by sound. I discovered a place where this can all be seen at its very best. Will you come?"

"It is all so lovely," she sighed, "but if there is some special point of vantage I shall be glad to go there."

"You had better take my arm," he suggested, "for although the night is bright, the footing is treacherous in places."

With the spell of the moonlight upon them they traversed quite a bit of woodland to the edge of the point which ended rather abruptly with a descent of from ten to twelve feet to the beach below.

"Do you mind a bit of a scramble down here?" he asked.

Mary laughed a little rippling trill. "No, indeed, I've done it many a time."

Together — he with a guiding hand — they made the descent, laughing and slipping.

"Now I'm going to ask you to look straight ahead, off across the bay, until we reach the point I have in mind so that you may see it as a separate picture, in the best light."

"All right, I promise not to peek. The view out there isn't to be sneezed at," and her eyes followed the pathway the moon made for itself over the glistening, rippling water.

They walked the rest of the way over the soft sands in silence; the music of the orchestra still

reaching them with the mellow, softened effect of distance.

Finally he stopped.

"Now you may look," he said, releasing her arm.

Mary turned.

Her exclamation was scarcely more than a breath. They stood together facing a wide, sweeping curve of beach where the waves were breaking with a soft splash and running in white ranks of bubbling phosphorescence one after another. This was the foreground of the wonderful picture. Then sharply outlined against the sky rose the point of land crested with swaying colored lights, the deep blue shadows of trees, and groups of silhouetted, moving forms, and over all the gentle, beneficent, soft light of the full moon.

"Is it as beautiful as I implied?" he asked, stepping closer to her side.

"Far more than I ever imagined — almost too beautiful," she murmured. "For sometimes beauty is so great it almost hurts."

For some moments they stood in silence, the scene making a lasting, never-to-be-forgotten impression on both their minds.

"Miss Mary"— his deep, quiet voice broke

the stillness —" Miss Mary, do you realize what you have been to me, and to Ruth, and to Danny — what your presence has come to mean to me? — Could you — oh, Mary," he put his arm about her and lifted her face that he might look in her eyes, " Could you learn to love me? " Then without waiting for an answer he continued: " Look — look at those two figures at the left, up there," and he gently turned her face again toward the point of land where clearly defined were the unmistakable figures of Ruth and Richard. They were throwing stones in the water below; they were always together, just as jolly good friends, but would it always be so?

Mary said not a word, but she slipped her hand in his, and made a little confiding movement, and gently the mantle of Ruffles descended to her shoulders.